

THE DIAL

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IGOR STRAVINSKY

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Translated From the French by Ezra Pound

THE FOREWORD

IN 1924 *La Revue Musicale* issued a special Stravinsky number containing among other things an essay by the author of these presents. A reader acquainted with that article might, calling upon the force of memory, observe that the portrait of the composer which I now attempt to assemble differs in certain ways from that presented in 1924. I am not trying to worm out of the discrepancy; I wd. rather insist upon the dissemblance and underline it the more. If there is one thing I regret above another it is that I cannot more completely *renew* the conception of the Stravinskian art, which was at the root of the former essay.

Among the more or less dubious principles of criticism, one appears to me undeniable, to wit: A work of art is inexhaustible for our intelligence, in the same way that a living person is inexhaustible, it constitutes in a sense a sort of "*complexio oppositorum*."

Starting from this principle, sometimes enunciated, more often tacitly admitted, one usually ends with a negation of any dogmatism whatsoever in criticism, and a negation of all "spirit of system" or classification—demanding on the contrary whether it be possible for a man who wants to understand, and to transmit his comprehension, to renounce dogmatizing, and systematizing; to renounce the introduction of an artificial unity, a sort of *Ersatz*, into the work, to replace the living unity, infinitely rich and com-

plex, and full of contradictions which the (analytic?) intelligence¹ cannot get at. We have to *appear* dogmatic, (the savant, and even the experimenter himself cannot escape this); the only corrective one can rake up in such a method is clearly to take count of one's own limits and insufficiencies, and be at any moment ready to abandon any single point of view, the minute one has pushed it to the extreme development possible to it. . . . There is in this a question of tact and also of humility.

At any rate, this is what I am now attempting, surrendering the chronological treatment of Stravinsky's work (that I had observed in 1924) and considering—not as in time—the different characteristic aspects of that work as it now presents itself in ensemble.

RUSSIAN AND EUROPEAN

Interviewed by a Russian journalist, Stravinsky once condemned Scriabine as "a being devoid of all national character. He hasn't a passport. One must have a passport."

Emitted in this categoric tone, which one finds in Stravinsky's music as clearly as in his conversation, this declaration—fairly debatable at first approach—appears in any case very characteristic of Stravinsky himself, especially if one considers that the declaration was very recently made. Since *Pulcinella*, that is from 1918 to the present, Stravinsky has given us a series of works which (with the exception of *Mavra*, where he turns back to Glinka) seem to have nothing especially Russian about them, but which connect rather with XVIIIth-century Italian and German traditions. It is now ten years since the composer abandoned the so vast domain of Russian popular song, from which he had for so long drawn inspiration, and which had been the base of nearly all his work up to Noces and Renard (1917).

Nevertheless the author of the *Octuor* and of so many other compositions into which there enters not one ounce of Russian material (Russian, that is, in the sense that Rimsky's *Sadko* is Russian) evidently considers himself, even to-day, an essentially national artist. Before deciding whether this pretension is justified, we must try to solve a question of more general order: How can we determine the *national* character of any musical composition?

¹ The original reads "intelligence," but obviously indicates that of the critic, not intelligence at large.—Translator's note.

In other words: what criterion can we employ to discover whether a given composer is national, and whether another given composer is not?

The first idea springing into one's head is that the national character of a work depends on the nature of the themes employed by the composer; all works wd. be national if nourished by melodies, rhythms, harmonic formulae taken from a given folk-lore, or finding in it their inspiration. But this hypothesis won't work, for on this basis the Quatuor, op. 59 of Beethoven wd. be a russian work, and the *Enfantines* of Moussorgsky wouldn't. Debussy would not have a passport (or what Mr Stravinsky calls one) but one could get such a passport very easily, and composers cd. swap passports when the whim took them; to gain greek nationality, for example, one cd. simply reach into the Bourgauld-Ducoudray grab-bag; and Rimsky's collection wd. permit any one of us to write Russian music . . . We must, evidently, seek for some other formula.

Are we to call a work "national" when it conforms to the musical traditions of the country, or not merely to the musical traditions, but to the country's modes of thinking and feeling, and to its conception of art? This seems nearer the mark. And yet all these things are very vague and inconstant. The moment we try to elucidate this idea, it shows itself to be filled with traps. Admitting that each nation has what you might call its genius, something peculiar to it, and manifest particularly in its musical feeling, and even in its very conception of the sonorous art, and of musical beauty, how are we to compute the specific characteristics of this "genius"? We can't get at them directly; the thing is offered us only in the series of productions which constitute the art of a people, or of a country. France, certainly, possesses its musical traditions; we know them from the compositions of the masters, which seem to display among themselves a certain consanguinity, but this is very indefinite and undefinable. And who moreover guarantees us against the insurgence of some great composer who will turn the lot of these traditions bottom side up? One may be sure that in such a contingency, people will not fail to object to this "new movement," and against this "revolutionary" stuff they will set the "true french tradition"; but . . . since the musician of genius will, in spite of all this, impose himself . . . they will end by annexing him, and by discovering that although he in-

novates, it is "nevertheless undeniable that he" connects with the above mentioned "tradition" and that he is only developing it, and enriching it. Such, in short, was the story of Debussy, at first rejected as "against clear ideas," "contrary to the latin genius," and so forth, and to-day (quite rightly) considered the *french* musician *par excellence*.

I drag in this example not for the vain pleasure of deriding yet again and once more the inconstancy of human opinion, but because I think it brings us to the heart of our problem. The desire to annex a man of genius is the expression not only of a very natural national pride, but also of the idea, or rather presentiment that a man of genius can't help being representative of a country, a nation, and that, in consequence, he *ought* to be connectable in one way or another with his precursors, who have reflected each in his way the spirit of their nation. In this sense one may say that genius has always a passport, that it can't help having one, even if it don't want to; thus reducing Stravinsky's remark to a demand that the artist ought to have genius; or that denying an artist national character one denies his talent; and that to say a given artist has talent and no national character is to emit an antinomy.

If we admit this essentially representative character of the artist, starting with the postulate that this exceptional animal, this phenomenon unique in its kind, is eminently "typical," and that he (the monstrosity) and not the man in the street really incarnates the genius of the race, then our question: By what criterion shall we judge that a composer is national? leaves us but one answer: He is national in proportion to the actual worth of his work. And in the particular case before us, we have to admit *a priori* that Stravinsky's art is profoundly rooted in the soil of Russia, as profoundly as that of Glinka or Moussorgsky.

We shd. try to discover Stravinsky's passport. It will not be easy; for if it is undeniable that the man of genius is necessarily, in one sense, "traditionalist," his very function consists in realizing and bringing to light certain facets of the national spirit which have, up to his day, remained hidden, which have existed perhaps only as latent potential, and which have seemed perhaps wholly alien to that spirit. In Stravinsky's case the element of innovation is particularly noticeable; to such a degree that many, even among his admirers, deny that there is any national character to

his work subsequent to *Pulcinella*. This seems to me a prize example of that disastrous method which works not from historic facts—here the series of extant musical compositions of the russians—but with general ideas, such as “the slavic soul” or “the latin genius,” and so forth; ideas which aren’t even the product of an *abstraction* but merely a sort of residuum, the lees of divers impressions and images. If we want to find Stravinsky’s passport we shd. keep free of these vague conglomerations, and keep hold of the relations which exist—ought to exist—between his art and the actual works of his predecessors, remaining where possible in the domain of fact.

II

The beginning of Russian music is usually dated from Glinka, and rightly. You may, up to a point, consider him the Peter the Great of Russian musical art. Before the Life for the Czar Russia had a popular music, extremely rich and varied in the different regions but as yet very imperfectly known; the compositions almost exclusively vocal, were the work of amateurs, “dilettantes” as they were then called, and foreign artists, mostly Italians, who came to the Petersburg court.

These dilettantes and even certain Italians, such as Cavos in his opera *Ivan Soussanine*, had already tried to introduce russian popular songs in the music of court and salon. Glinka’s music differs from that of his predecessors and contemporaries in the very nature of melodies chosen, and also in the method of treatment.

The russian musical folk-lore was a true *terra incognita* at the beginning of the last century. The dilettantes, and naturally even more the foreigners knew nothing of russian songs but the semi-popular stuff that had already felt the influence of occidental musical training. This meant that they knew nothing of the songs essentially modal in nature, and that have a peculiar twist that Europe now knows by way of Rimsky’s transpositions and from those of Borodine and Moussorgsky, but which wd. certainly have shocked and appalled the predecessors of Glinka (had they met them) by their “rough and barbarous” aspect.

But what is more important, these popular episodes had been merely a sort of *hors d'oeuvre*, curiosities more or less exotic, pleasing on that ground, and treated without research or synthesis.

Glinka's glory consists precisely in having made this paradoxical synthesis, which none of his forerunners seems to have dreamed of. His musical gifts, his taste, his technical mastery infinitely superior to that of the "dilettanti" permitted him to take these national songs as basis, and build upon them an art occidental in form, thus conferring a european nationalization on the russian musical genius.

But here one shd. observe an interesting fact, gravid with consequence: Glinka's operas (and naturally his romances in higher degree) out of which all russian music has emerged, the *Life for the Czar*, *Rousslann and Ludmila*, generally seem to the foreigner insufficiently russian. The italian elements that one easily notices in them annoy the european, who imagines that the art of Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodine, and Moussorgsky constitutes a progress from that of Glinka in that it is purer and more national. Yet the Russian opinion differs entirely from this, and it might seem to have some sort of value. Russians recognized themselves in this music full of italian, french, and german influence. One must not forget that the Five never denied Glinka, they considered themselves as his heirs, and saw *Rousslann* as the masterwork of Russian music.

The error of the westerners is quite explicable, they seek in Russian art precisely its differences from their own; that is to say a certain "barbarous" quality, rough, incult, as you might say, asiatic. This asiatic visage seems to them the true face of Russia. A de-orientalized Russian is no longer, as they see him, a real one. One cannot deny that oriental thought and sensibility have had an effect on russian art, but this art has also its own particular physiognomy, and this also is undeniable. The exotic character which for Europeans clothes certain oriental pages of Rimsky, of Borodine, of Balakireff is also apparent to Russians, and exercises upon them a charm analogous to that felt by the French and Germans.

It is Glinka, moreover, who first *showed* the musical East to the Russians, and who gave it nationalization papers in our policed and learned music; but *Rousslann and Ludmila* is based on the *contrast* between the russian world and the asiatic. This contrast is no less apparent, intentional, and systematic in Borodine's *Prince Igor*. The Steppes of Central Asia, by the same composer, displays this contrast in still more striking manner with the direct opposition of the soldier's song, clearly diatonic and frankly

rhythmic, to the oriental song with its tickling chromatism and its boneless undulation. Ultimately one finds this contrast even in the *Oiseau de Feu*, the only work in which Stravinsky has offered sacrifice to musical orientalism. Everywhere and always, in russian music since Glinka, the orient is treated as a picturesque element, its characteristics serve to underline still more heavily the specific characteristics of russian song. The complete opposite is true of the occidental elements audible in the works of Glinka and his successors, especially of Tschaikovsky. Obviously in fitting the russian popular melodies to the european musical idiom, with its two modes, its tonal conceptions, its complex forms, its summary and rigid rhythemics, one had to commit violence in certain ways to the original melodic character, and to make certain sacrifices, the importance of which was certainly *not* apparent to Glinka; nevertheless his works, and the whole subsequent development of russian music amply justify the sacrifice made. "Conquerors are not judged" . . . this victory itself being the proof that the way taken by Glinka was the right way. Such a success as the *Life for the Czar*, in which Mozart, italian opera, the french *opéra comique*, and russian song are composed into a living unity, bears witness to the profound affinity existing between russian musical sensibility and european musical culture. In receiving this culture, so peculiar, so conventional, but in its way so complete and finished, the russian musicians did not betray their origins; had it been otherwise they could at most have written nothing more than pastiches, and would have remained merely imitators, more or less clever. What strikes people immediately about Glinka even if they don't much like his art, is the mastery of it which makes him the peer of the western european composers of his time. The Five are his inferiors in this mastery, there is clumsiness in certain of their works, one finds them behaving as pupils at once timid and daring, or as autodidacts.

Stravinsky's case seemed incomprehensible, and the author of the *Symphony for Wind Instruments* seemed devoid of national character to those (still the immense majority) who repeat the old gag about Scratch the Russian you find the Tartar. They think russian art ought, and of necessity, to be violent, bedizened, nostalgic. . . . But any one knowing the good period of russian history, its golden age, from the reign of Alexander 1st through the first years of Nicholas 1st will grasp the true filiation of Stravinsky. This period gives us Glinka, the first of the russian composers, and

also Pushkin, the greatest poet of Russia, whom even Dostoevsky proclaimed the "very incarnation of Russian genius." Pushkin, like Glinka, owes much to occidental masters, he was fed on foreign writing, especially french and english, both Chénier and Byron exercising immense influence on him.

I cite only these two cases, but one might cite many others, works impregnated with this taste, this measure, this equilibrium, or even marked with the classic spirit, qualities, that is, which the west is wont to claim as its own particular property.

These qualities appear likewise in the architecture of Alexander the First, "Empire" triumphing in Petersburg, differing wholly from ancient Moscow, where italian barocco mingles with forms taken from Asia. If we go back still further, beyond the mongol invasions that modified the visage of antique Russia, we will find the same care for a harmony, the same formalist research, the same so called "classic" spirit, in both the russian painting and building, that had drunk in Byzantine traditions, which being Byzantine were, in consequence, hellenistic; these were absorbed, and created admirable works, greatly superior to the debased orientalist product of the Muscovite era.

One must hammer yet again on the fact that: If occidental traditions had been really alien to russian mentality and sensibility, the churches of Pskov and Novgorod, their frescoes, their ikons; and later in Petersburg under Alexander 1st, the apparition of artists like Glinka and Pushkin, or to-day a work like Stravinsky's Oedipe, that is to say all this art of equilibrium, and luminosity, truly Apollonian, would be absolutely inexplicable. It is, on the other hand, perfectly explainable if one admits that the russians are not aliens to the family of occidental races, bred on graeco-roman tradition; and that these artists, going for their schooling to european culture find themselves in their normal habitat, and but take up something rightly their own.

Certainly Moussorgsky's *Enfantes*, and Boris Godounov are essentially russian in the sense that one finds in them certain modes of thought and of sensibility that are common to a number of russian products—musical, poetic, and plastic. Stravinsky's *Renard* is also russian, but so is the *Octuor* and also the *Oedipe*. One observes a relationship between the two latter works (as a group) and the *Renard*, a relationship analogous to that of a muscovite

church, say the cathedral of St Basil the Blest, and the Place du Théâtre in Petersburg the crowning work of their "empire" style, for which a foreigner will care very little, searching as he will be, for the exclusively asiatic. And the relationship wd. be found again between Pushkin's popular tales, Tzar Saltan, for example, and the Dramatic Scenes, such as the Miser Knight, or Mozart and Salieri. When Stravinsky turns toward Bach or Haendel, he follows *one* of the russian traditions, and presents one of the numerous facets of Russia, the same one that Glinka presents in turning to Mozart, or Pushkin when he follows Molière or Tirso de Molina's Guest of Stone; or Tchaikovsky with his flagrant italianisms, Rimsky and Balakireff studying Berlioz and Liszt, or Scriabine following Wagnerian fashions. If Stravinsky declares that the last of these has no passport, it merely means that he denies the musical value of his work; having for it an almost physical repulsion he fails to perceive its russian filiation, its affinity with Tchaikovsky, who emerges directly from Glinka, the common ancestor of them all.

III

This historic excursion should help us to understand the situation of the various musical groups and parties at the moment of Stravinsky's *début*. Stravinsky studied in Petersburg, under Rimsky's direction. Nevertheless his first compositions, *Symphonie in E-flat* 1905-7, *Faun and Shepherdess*, a suite for voice and orchestra 1907, *Scherzo Fantastique* 1908, and various melodies for voice and piano 1908, '10, '11, show scarcely any trace of the Five, whose influence is only later apparent. His first works conform rather to the aesthetic of the Petersburg conservatoire.

Founded by Anton Rubinstein, this conservatory was from its inception the stronghold of academism. The Five, especially Balakireff and Rimsky, conducted a fervid war against it, which wd. seem to have ended in their victory, in so far as the latter became its director, without however changing the curriculum very greatly. When political events ousted him in 1905, he was succeeded by Glazounov, his pupil, the foremost local exponent of eclecticism and academic procedure. In his symphonies (nine of them) in his symphonic poems, the *Kremlin*, *Stenka Razine*, et cetera, he,

Glazounov, does not fail to utilize popular melodies and rhythms, in close conjunction with themes and harmonic formulae of the Mendelssohnian, Brahmsian, or Wagnerian order, all with impeccable craftsmanship and a real virtuosity. This neuter style that reduces the works of the masters into formula—this being the very essence of academism—still exercises a great influence on the younger russian composers, who regard it both as “classicism” and as “romanticism” (the latter term being void of meaning). In opposition to the picturesque and descriptive tendencies found in Rimsky and his friends; in opposition also to the exacerbated lyricism of Tschaikovsky and the Moscow school, Glazounov’s academism in Russia was opening, it wd. seem, the way to “pure music” and to an essentially constructive art.

The young Stravinsky passed through this also. And the fact wd. seem highly significant, if one consider the path later taken by our composer. It seems as if, after a long *détour*, Stravinsky in his latest works has come back to, or rediscovered certain conceptions which were perhaps already ripening in his mind at the start, but which he was incapable of realizing at that time, even if he were then conscious of them. The symphony in E-flat is certainly a work of constructive tendencies, the musical thought in it is given up wholly to itself, and has no aim save its own development. But one has only to compare these pages written under the aegis of the Petersburg conservatory, with the Concerto or Piano sonata, to see clearly the abyss between academism and classicism. For the moment I wish merely to indicate that if one will notice the earliest works of Stravinsky and the eclecticism of his start, one will better understand what he is now getting at with his classicism. It might perhaps deserve the ancient phrase: Dream of youth accomplished by the ripe man.

One might say that academism has no party, it is a language *par excellence* cosmopolite, and attains, in art, the ideal held up by Esperanto. Nothing is more like one conservatory than . . . another conservatory: Leipzig or Petersburg, ever the same. Admittedly, every country is eclectic and academic in its own way, but the academicians of all nations are the people of all others best constructed to come to a mutual understanding among themselves; possibly because they have very little to say to each other.

Thus the first works of Stravinsky belong to no national tradition—unless one consider academism itself a tradition, although

it has rather the nature of an ubiquitous malady. Our composer takes contact with his native land, first in the *Fire Bird*, breaking there with eclecticism never thereto to return.

What marks this ballet as national is not, as I see it, the popular turn of melodies treated by the composer, but the filiation, that is to say the *Fire Bird*, connects directly with the picturesque, descriptive, decorative style of Rimsky-Korsakov, particularly with the *Coq d'Or* and *Kastchei the Immortal*. In conformity to the canon of nearly all russo-oriental works it is based on the opposition (ballet subject here as well as the music) between the Russian world and the oriental world, the first is luminous, frank, more or less naïve, trusting in its force, the force of good that will triumph; the other is confused, mysterious, full of snares and temptations, voluptuous, cruel (ancestral memories doubtless of the endless strife with the nomad mongols). After this honorific wreath offered to his teacher, Stravinsky gives up Rimsky and his friends once and for all. The only one of the Five with whom he will still from time to time take contact, is Moussorgsky. The relations between the author of *Boris*, and the author of *Noce* are fairly complex and have never yet, so far as I know, been analysed.

It might nevertheless seem at first sight as if the works of Stravinsky's second period, based on popular themes or inspired by folklore, i. e., from *Petrushka* to *Renard*, merely continue the development of the art of the Five. But this is not in the least so. Immediately after the *Fire Bird* the composer takes quite a new path, he commits the revolutionary act in the sense that he introduces into Russian music, conceptions and a style which had been up till that moment absolutely foreign to it. Stravinsky's evolution surprises us usually by its brusque turns, the sudden leaps, which seem to the spectator like so many breaks with the past; but never has the dissolution of continuity been so complete as between the *Fire Bird* and *Petrushka*. One may easily go wrong at this point, for the melodic matter treated by the composer seems to establish a sort of connecting link between the "russian" works of Stravinsky and those of his immediate predecessors. But one cannot too often repeat that: in art it is the way a thing is made to function that counts. From *Petrushka* onward this way differs fundamentally from the procedures of Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodine, and Balakireff.

In trying to trace the national origins of Stravinsky's art the

principal difficulty is not offered by Oedipe, but by Petrushka. To judge how greatly this ballet of Stravinsky's, and the works of his that follow it, differ from those of the Five, one need but compare the Fair scene in Rimsky's *The Word of the City of Kitège* with the first scene of Petrushka. We will analyse that difference later. For the moment suffice it to note clearly that Russian life, speaking in a general way: rites, games, beliefs, customs, costumes, special modes of thought and sensation, is and are musically realized by Stravinsky in an absolutely new and original fashion, as far removed from the picturesque and descriptive tendencies of Rimsky-Korsakov as from what one might call the "humanism" of Moussorgsky.

IV

I have tried to prove that Stravinsky's "europeanism" doesn't prevent his being profoundly national; a russian in being "occidental" merely obeys one of the basic traditions of his race, and of his country. But looking closely, we find that the rôle of the composer of the *Sacre* in occidental musical life is very different from that which his russian predecessors had to be content with. The forms used by Glinka, Balakireff, and their colleagues were, more or less, copies of foreign models; face to face with european masters, the russian composers, with the exception of Moussorgsky, appeared usually as pupils, even when, as in Rimsky's case, they in their turn, gave lessons in instrumentation. Stravinsky's position is quite different; he is a creator of european forms, taking "form" in its largest sense. Borodine's innovations in european music come, as one might say, from the outside, and are not found strictly in the line of development of western music; but Stravinsky, especially during these latter years, definitely enters that line.

Stravinsky has assimilated european musical culture, he is penetrated with its laws, with its traditions. If he modifies them, if he imposes a new orientation, he innovates not as a foreigner introducing new ideas and new procedures, but as an autochthonous entity, modifying the spirit of his *milieu* from within. This revolutionary is the child of the land where he works, where he creates, transforming musical conceptions which belong both to it and to him. The new style which he introduces in Europe is by no means

a product or "function" of the matter that he has treated for a decade—i. e., Russian song. Neither the polyphony of Stravinsky's art, nor its tonal structure, nor its harmonic complexity, nor its syncopated rhythms have come from Russia: all these characteristics mark the conclusion and the renewal of certain purely occidental traditions.

The Russian Stravinsky, author of the *Sacre* and of *Oedipe* is the most european, the most essentially occidental of all extant musicians, if these terms "european" and "occidental" signify a certain type of artistic culture.

Yet music is not an "international language," and to-day, in any case, it is not evolving as a sort of "sonorous fraternity." Any one who doubts this statement, might have convinced himself, especially after the war when generous efforts were made to create a sort of musical "Internationale." Such at any rate was the aim of the S. I. M. C.—*Société internationale de musique contemporaine*. In the festivals organized by this society musicians of different countries learned, it is true, to know and respect each other, but they learned also their oppositions, and took clearer cognizance of their grounds for aesthetic difference, and they returned to their homes with a much keener sense of belonging to clearly determined national groups.

One of the characteristics of our epoch is the almost exaggerated development of national schools in music, each trying to affirm its own complete independence. It wd. be a delusion to swallow the idea that this exacerbated particularism can be surmounted by the creation of a cosmopolitan idiom in which all the differences wd. be mutually compensated and neutralized. It wd. scarcely be desirable, and it wd. be in any case beyond possibility. If Stravinsky has a place above these differences, if he seems to us to-day the most notable representative of the european spirit in music, it is, not because he is international, but, contrarily, because he is essentially national. His universality comes from his genius, or paraphrasing his own formula: the passport takes him over the frontiers.

TWO POEMS

BY JAMES DALY

MARINE

intricate slow shuddering lights conquer
the fog lo they are stars and there far out
see that phantasmal glimmer called a ship emerge
with the moon
bravely

O on such a night
pilgrimage ends
in quiet brief as the sea's
brief as the blood's quiet by this quiet sea

THE UNVANQUISHED

What matter now if the dawn bring
Only true moaning of the tide
That all life's flood is but a small
Sleep whose ebbing dream is brief?
I turn to that sleep with joy,
Having learned in its scant dreaming
The image of your pride—
A pride that will know no fall,
Blood having made its wing;
A pride that none shall destroy,
For its wing is grief.

FOUR CHAPTERS OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY

BY KWEI CHEN

MY BIRTH

I WAS born and brought up in a small village in the interior of China. My parents were Confucian by birth. Confucius' teachings had been the principle of life of the Chinese people for more than two thousand years before my father and mother were born, before my father's and my mother's fathers were born, and before their fathers were born.

On the third day after my birth, as I was told years after, my fond paternal grandfather came early in the morning to my father, and said: "Here I have it . . . I have it . . . the name of the boy." Carefully he took from his pocket a sheet of red paper on which he had written in his exquisite calligraphy: "Newly born male child given at Third Morning its name, Ching-yü." Instantly my father took the paper and pasted it on the family shrine. The two characters (慶餘) of my name mean Abundance of Joy. They are from a famous saying in The Book of History: "The family that has accumulated good deeds will reap abundance of joy from its descendants." When I entered high school, I adopted by myself the character Kwei (逵) for it was the custom in China that a student should be called by another name in school than that used at home. Kwei means literally highway; it connotes straightforwardness, a quality for which I have chosen, with varying success, to strive.

Since in China as elsewhere there are successful men, there are also men who are jealous of these. I happened to be born when my parents were in many ways prosperous. In celebrating my birth they used more firecrackers than usual, and the sound of joy stirred the jealous nature of a man in the neigh-

NOTE: In the following sketches I do not attempt to give a complete account of my life. Inasmuch as these episodes are of my actual experience, however, they illustrate a Chinese view of life which may be regarded as authentic, if not authoritative. If my readers are not misinformed about China through my words, I shall be content.

bourhood. A young cousin of my mother ran to her and told her that he heard the man say: "Some day the boy will disgrace the family." My mother was very indignant at first, but laughed afterwards. She replied to her cousin: "Go and tell the man that I said my boy will be respected by all the good members of the Chen family." Here, as a rule, my mother, as she told me this story, would pause for a moment, staring at me gravely though encouragingly, and then conclude in the usual way: "Now you are growing and will be a man before long. It is for you yourself to make up your mind whether or not you will be the kind of son your mother has always hoped you would be. I shall not be able to watch you throughout your life!"

MY COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY

In former days before a boy began his schooling, there was a ceremony upon the occasion of his Formal Commencement of Learning. His parents took it very seriously, being careful to see that their boy should have a good start. Usually the most virtuous and most learned man among the relatives or friends of the family was asked to be the teacher on this occasion. Afterward the man became the First Teacher of the boy, standing as a pattern for the boy's life. Should the boy later distinguish himself in the province either of literature or state affairs, the townspeople would like to say: "Indeed 'Without clouds in the sky there can be no rain.' He had for his First Teacher So-and-so, the most virtuous and most learned man that ever lived in our county."

Now I was to leave my mother-teacher and to be sent to a regular school. Following the ancient custom my parents planned a Commencement ceremony for me. They requested my mother's own uncle to be my First Teacher. He was a retired magistrate. When in office he had ruled his people so wisely that crimes were not committed for months at a time. It was said that within his county people did not need to bar their outer doors at night; nor would any of them take possession of what they found on the streets. They loved their magistrate for his great kindness and respected him for his strictness in enforcing the laws. On the day when he left his office the old ones leaning on the young, fathers leading their children, formed a long procession to wish him peace and safety on his way home. At the head of the procession was

the huge Ten-Thousand-Names-Umbrella of bright red satin embroidered with four large characters: Magistrate's Heart Like Parent's. It was a gift to their magistrate from all the people of the county. Their names were written in tiny script on the thirty or more white satin strips hanging from the umbrella. The golden tassels gleamed while the people shouted: "Long live the Parent-Magistrate!" Thus my mother's uncle was one of the very few who enjoyed the highest reverence in our county. Fortunate is the boy whose parents can invite such a celebrated man for his First Teacher!

My parents also took care that the day selected for the ceremony was when the Star of Literature was on duty in Heaven. Unlike the Greek Muses, the Chinese Patron of Letters is conceived as a sour-looking old man, though his appearance is not at all in conformity with his character for he is good and righteous. It is he that sees who deserve to pass the Examinations each year, and one with an ambition toward letters would indeed be unwise should he not beseech the acquaintance and protection of this venerable Star.

On the evening preceding the ceremony my mother's uncle arrived. He walked the ten miles from his home. My parents wanted to have him come in a sedan-chair, but he insisted that "an easy walk is a chariot."

At the dinner-table he and my father conversed a great deal while they leisurely sipped old wine from small white porcelain cups. They conversed mainly of the reading of books and on being a man. My grand-uncle's voice rang like the bell in a Confucian temple which gives a tone both of peace and virility; surely his virtue was like the wine of which the quality increases with its age.

Finally rice was brought in bowls for all, and bean-cake soup was served.

"Ah!" exclaimed our retired magistrate, smiling, "bean-cake soup! It has the pastoral simplicity! The late Imperial Examiner's father used to hang on the wall of his modest library this little poem of his own composition:

" 'Guests come,
They are asked to dine
On salted eggs and bean-cakes.

Please forget the simple fare,
The friendship of good men is
As pure water.' "

Before we left the table,

"Indeed the ancients do not deceive us," said my grand-uncle, closing the conversation. "They say: 'To read extensively and to be able to write well are second in importance for a scholar and a gentleman.' What is the real value of a man, if it is not measured by the integrity of his character and the nobleness of his mind?"

The next morning everyone in the house wore a reserved smile. Soon after breakfast two scarlet lacquer trays painted with gold were brought to the tiger-legged table in the middle of the men's parlour. In one tray were four brushes, ten ink-bricks, twenty silver dollars, and an old book. These were for my grand-uncle. The brushes were the best of their kind, ivory-tipped and each carved with four characters: White Crane Crossing Sky, symbolic of the beauty and freedom of a creative mind. The ink-bricks were from far-away Hwei-chow, and were very old, for the Chinese believe that the longer the ink-bricks are preserved, the purer will be their fragrance, even as men become wiser when they are older. The twenty silver dollars were sewed on to a red silk-covered pasteboard in four rows. The old book was of the rarest edition of the Sung dynasty (960-1276 A.D.) in the famous Butterfly-style binding—when the book is open, its leaves resemble the two wings of a butterfly. On the other tray were two brushes, an ink-grindstone, two ink-bricks, a small pitcher of light blue porcelain half filled with clean water, and a roll of thin writing-paper; all of them were wrapped in cheerful red. These were the gifts from my parents for me, and were to be used in this ceremony.

In the upper part of this parlour was the sanctuary of Confucius for whom we had erected a tablet inscribed in gold on a red ground. The inscription read: "The most perfect, the most sage Ancient Master Confucius—Sacred Place." Before the tablet were a pair of large candles in their bronze holders and a triple-legged brazen censer shining with a carved unicorn. The unicorn is the symbol of a Sage, who is the true friend of mankind, though men, unable to understand him, think him inauspicious because he is different from them.

Second Elder-Brother lighted the candles and the incense, and came to my father's study to announce that everything was ready. Presently my grand-uncle, my father, and two of his cousins walked toward the parlour, and I timidly followed. We were all in blue gowns and black jackets—such was the costume of the Chinese scholar. In the parlour my grand-uncle stood on the west side, and the rest of us on the east, facing him. Then at a sign from my father I stepped upon the mat before the tablet of Confucius. In the court-yard my brother kindled a long chain of firecrackers, while I bowed, swung up and down my folded hands, kotowed, and put more incense into the censer. I did these things nervously, lest I make a mistake or forget what I had been told to do. When I came back to my place, my father, my uncles, and I bowed and swung up and down our folded hands before my grand-uncle who meantime returned us the courtesy in the same way. Now my father led me nearer to my grand-uncle, and once more I bowed, swung up and down my folded hands, and kotowed, this time to my First Teacher. Thereafter my teacher and I sat down at the table and my father and his cousins withdrew.

My teacher took a sheet of paper and wrote on it the twenty-four characters which constituted the first lesson for all schoolboys of that time. In Chinese they were in rhymed verse, of which the English adaptation is as follows:

"The great man,
Kon-fu-tze,
Educated three thousand—
Seventy became sages.
They all loved high-mindedness,
And knew the laws of propriety.
You, little student,
Never cease to learn!"

He taught me first how to read these characters one by one, then how to write them. Finally he told me to copy the lesson twice with my own hand, and went to my father's study.

"Congratulations!" I heard him say. "The literary atmosphere in your Chen clan is yet abundant. The younger generation shows conspicuously the gift which has been the happy bequest of your family for many scores of years. In the course of time we shall

see that the young ones are not at all unworthy of their fathers and grandfathers."

Genial conversation, with plentiful tea, followed the ceremony. I felt I was once more newly born in a world, the glorious world of learning with Confucius as my father.

I GO TO SCHOOL

Within a fortnight after my commencement ceremony, I was in a private school about a mile from home. Carrying my books I went to school every morning and returned home before dusk. Thus I could be near my mother, and in the meantime have schooling regularly. It was early autumn, the rice was ripe, and who can withhold his joy on seeing the bright yellow grains—the pure, bright gold—glittering in the morning rays? Yes, they are gold, but more than gold to the farmers. They are their work, their hope, their laughter, their tears. They are their life! My heart melted with the joy of the reapers who were already singing high their

". . . humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day"

as I passed them early in the morning. I was grateful to them too, for I knew the work was hard although they seemed to enjoy it. I remembered well the couplet my mother had taught me:

"Know that each grain in your bowl
Means toil and pain."

My grandmother's nurse had also told me to regard rice as a sacred object. She said that once upon a time a young man saw a grain of cooked rice on the floor, and picked it up and ate it. Later he won the First Place in the Palace Examination, and married the Emperor's beautiful daughter!

Throughout the season I walked on that road. I watched the first harvest begin, and saw the last one finished. Throughout the season I noticed none but cheerful faces; even when they went home in the evening after a long day's toil, they did not appear weary. "The poor, ignorant Chinese farmers!" The good Euro-

pean and American missionaries find themselves eloquent on the subject when talking to their pious countrymen. Yes, poor the Chinese farmers are, and ignorant. But as for the soul, theirs, it seems to me, is the most highly blessed by Heaven.

For myself, I was not without occupation. In the morning I played with the dewdrops on the leaves of the wild plants along the country road; in the evening I listened to the sunset melodies of the birds and insects, and tried to harmonize them with my own untutored songs when no one was near me. In three months I became very familiar with the large stones in the middle of the road. I had counted them many times, and remembered the particular hues of some for a long time. Ah! the rising sun, the evening-red clouds, the happy reapers. . . . Was it not yesterday that I saw them all?

The next year I was again in the country school when the villagers were singing:

"Having passed the Half of the First Moon,
Last year's dead weeds now we burn.
Men and boys start their ploughing and schooling,
Women and girls their spinning and weaving."

I had now come to live there, hoping that I could save the time which I had spent with nature and my mother, for more books. It was my mother's idea. Although I did not like it, I took pride in obeying her and in being always willing to learn more. But the first month away from home and from my mother was very trying. For the rigidity in the old method of Chinese schools was mortal enemy to a child's nature. Many a time I had determined to flee back to my mother—to have but a moment's glimpse of her, which would immediately cure the hunger of my soul. . . . But I never could gather sufficient courage to execute my determination, for to flee from school was too degrading for me, and I knew that my mother would scold me for doing that, however much she might like to see me. To permit her boy to neglect his school work or to encourage him to think of anything but books would be as bad as to allow him to gamble. I had heard my mother say so.

Gradually I learned to submit to Fate, finding no other way advisable.

The daily program recurs now vividly to my mind. Every morning (there was no Sunday then) as the day was breaking, our teacher would come into the class-room and give us each a new lesson. We were to study it and read it aloud, then recite it, one by one, standing beside our teacher but facing in the opposite direction. Each was to finish his lesson before he could have breakfast.

One morning my mind happened to have gone home to my longed-for mother; I besought her to ignore the severe tradition and take me home just for a little while—a day or so. . . . Here, of course, in my mind I had said much more than I would have dared to say in her presence. While I was half dreaming,

“Study!” our teacher called out, slapping the table; “don’t you want breakfast?” It was for me.

I went back and forth several times from my seat to our teacher’s to recite my lesson, but could not succeed in a satisfactory manner. At length all but me had left the room for breakfast and I was alone with the teacher. He became more impatient; I, more fearful.

“Concentrate your mind on the lesson,” he said as he left the room, “and be ready to recite it when I come back.”

Oh, what humiliation! The empty room pricked the boy’s heart. The whole world was dark and cruel to him. Yet, he could not hate his teacher because he had been taught that he should always revere him; he could not hate his parents because he knew that they were doing all for his good; he could not hate himself because he saw no wrong on his part except his desire to see his mother. He then upbraided the Great Maker who had brought him into this weary world without his previous consent.

How could I study! My heart was burning as a wild fire; my head aching; tears bursting forth. I did not know what the teacher might do to me, but I was determined to receive whatever punishment he might inflict. My Second Elder-Brother was the first to return. He said nothing, but joined me in weeping. Then our teacher came back. I paid no attention to him and with my hands on the desk cushioning my head, wept anew.

“What is the matter with you to-day?” my teacher asked in a half angry tone. “Has a blue-eyed, red-bearded man carried off your mind?”

"Don't think you are here studying for me!" he continued, puffing at his long bamboo-root pipe, ivory-mouthed, with a shining brass bowl. "I don't care whether or not you study if you prefer to be ignorant. Nor would your parents care much, if you were not their son."

The teacher's words sounded reasonable. "Yes," thought I, "a good student must model after a good farmer. He goes barefooted working in the flooded fields, while the water is yet very cold. On an extremely hot summer day, he works, out in his field in the burning heat, while the rest of us stay inside the house. Yes, the farmer works hard and steadily toward a definite end. When autumn comes; when the green tassels are turning into pure, bright gold, he watches them as a lover would gaze at his beloved—the more he gazes at her the more beautiful she becomes. He is delighted. He is rewarded. Yes, I must devote myself to studying, as a farmer to working, so I too shall reap. Were I like a lazy man, a do-nothing—Lo! haven't I seen beggars wander hither and thither, homeless and forlorn, like withered leaves blown by the west wind, tasting dust? Should I, then, disgrace myself, disgrace my mother, disgrace the whole family?" I felt my ears and cheeks burn, and my heart beat violently. The contrast was as distinct as that between day and night. Gradually my heart was softened.

As I was wondering how I should change my attitude without injuring my pride, our teacher's wife entered the room. She begged her husband to excuse me from the whole morning's duty. When he gave his consent, she caught me by my shoulder, saying: "You are to play chess with me after breakfast. Let us go."

According to our daily program the first thing after breakfast was a review of the lessons of the preceding five days, and then the lessons of the five days preceding those. At eleven we would have tea and home-made cookies. The rest of the morning was to be devoted to cultivating calligraphy. In the afternoon our work began with one more new lesson for the day. Then we were to punctuate by ourselves the comments on the Classics, while reading them in silence. As the sun was sinking toward the horizon we opened our books of poetry and chanted our favourite verses, our bodies swaying and our hearts expanding.

About half an hour before dusk, the class was dismissed. My brother and I would stand by the door and watch the road leading toward home: perhaps a messenger was coming from our mother!

The evening was wholly for essay reading. The essays were of historical criticism and philosophical interpretation. Occasionally our teacher would begin a discourse, and *How to Live a Manly Life* took the place of a mother's lullaby. Finally everyone departed to sweet slumber.

THE FIVE CYPRESSES

Because only few people, a selected few, ever went to my Eleventh Uncle, and because of the quietness of the place and the orderly life the family lived, his house was called by the villagers *The Secular Temple*. From a distance one could see in the front yard five large cypress-trees forming a screen for the house. The cypress is well liked by the Chinese for its shape which is that of a Chinese brush, the symbol of creativeness, as well as for its being ever green. My uncle had named his house *The Five Cypresses*, alluding to his five children, two sons and three daughters, after the example of the poet Tao Chien of the Chin dynasty (265-419 A. D.), who had before his house five willows and called himself *Mr Five Willows*.

When one approached the Great Door, one read on the right: *Literature to Serve the Kingdom*; on the left: *Honesty to Bequeath to Descendants*. The characters were inscribed in black on two crimson boards symmetrically hung on the two sides of the door. They were written by a distant relative of ours who, according to the rumour, passed his *Examinations of the Province* by his calligraphy, because the Examiner liked his penmanship better than his composition. I heard people say that my grand-uncle, my First Teacher since my Commencement ceremony, actually saw this comment of the Chief Examiner made at the end of our distant relative's composition: "*His composition is commonplace, but in calligraphy he is exalted above all.*" In a way it is maddening to have such a reputation, but our relative was compensated by a handsome income of two or three thousand dollars a year which he earned by writing inscriptions for the stores in the city.

The Five Cypresses was built in the year when I was born. Before that my Eleventh Uncle had lived under the same roof with his three brothers and nine cousins in the house built by my great grandfather. As the members of the family increased, there was an increasing call for tact and patience from each in order to main-

tain harmony among them. My Eleventh Aunt, his wife, was of a very sensitive temperament. Though she always appeared to be pleasant in the presence of her relatives, she often shed tears to my mother in whom alone she confided. She had not learned how to please people she said, and she did not wish to please those who had ill-used her merely because she was one of the younger sisters-in-law. My mother would console her, saying: "The best protection from the Lengthy-tongued is to be deaf. Your mind will not be disturbed when you hear nothing, our wise men say. If I happen to hear people talk about me, I walk away as soon as I can. I pursue the right path, I sit on the correct seat, I say to myself: what is there in me that may not be talked about? The public is a mirror; it reflects clearly everything. They who accuse us falsely will be laughed at by the good." But my aunt did not suffer any the less from certain woman members in the family. It was her nature, she told my mother pathetically.

After I was born, my Eleventh Uncle came to my father one day and said: "Fourth Elder-Brother, I have decided to build a new house some half mile from here. Now you have three sons. You will need more rooms sooner or later. Do you not wish to have my portion of this house? . . . You know I can no longer remain and be happy. . . ." He was depressed. My father knew, of course, the cause. He agreed to buy from him in case he really wanted to leave the house.

My Eleventh Uncle and his family moved to their new house, The Five Cypresses, on the New Year's Eve of that year. There they had lived happily for almost ten years when suddenly my aunt died. In order to divert his attention from his deep grief, my father asked him if he would not take my Second Elder-Brother and me as his pupils. He consented. My brother and I went to live in his house as soon as the Half of the First Moon had passed.

The last time I had been there was for my aunt's funeral. The signs of mourning were still there. On the two crimson boards at the Great Door were pasted several strips of white paper. My uncle's daughters braided their hair with white thread; his sons wore white shoes. For according to the Confucian code the Chinese sons and daughters were required to wear the signs of mourning for their parents for two years. The first seven weeks after their parent's death, the sons were not allowed either to shave or to cut

their hair, and they were not to go out of their own house. During their two years' mourning, they could not marry, nor could they take the Examinations. In case they were officials, they had to resign; they could return to their post only with some special excuse. Although the Republic has abandoned by law these ancient customs, they are still in practice among the conservatives though in a modified manner.

My uncle's study and library occupied the rear part of his house, and the room for my brother and me was adjacent. All the windows faced the flower-garden. Above the entrance of the study were four characters inscribed in bright green on a horizontal yellow board: "Only the Learned Enter." Opposite it, above the door opening to the library there was a similar inscription in different characters: "Books Are Here Revered." On the two doors of a specially made bookcase a couplet was carved in relief with raised gold on a red ground:

"Enveloping the Entire Universe;
Preserving Past and Present."

Of all the paintings my uncle valued a piece by Cheng Benchou most highly. It was one of Rock and Bamboos, the favourite theme of the painter. There was on it also a quatrain of the artist's own composition written in his peculiar calligraphy. The English of the poem reads:

"Grey, grey there stands the Solitary Rock;
Straight, aspiring, the several Bamboos.
Their beauty no one is to know;
They dwell in a remote vale, concealed."

There was a clear-water pond in my uncle's garden. The garden had also a name. It was The Reflection of Red Clouds. My uncle called himself the Master of the Reflection of Red Clouds Garden, his pseudonym for his poetical works.

The name of the garden was inscribed on the garden wall, each of the three characters as large as one yard square. Under the inscription was a sketch by my uncle himself, expressing his view of nature and life in relation to the place of the garden in a home. He ended it with a couplet:

"In the empty rooms—leisure and deep stillness;
In the wood and garden—no worldly passions."

There were other couplets in large characters on the garden walls. I have always remembered the one written by my mother's brother in the bird-like script:

"For the beauty of the flowers, in spring early to rise;
In love with the moon, in autumn late to bed."

EVENING BELLS

BY FANG LING-YU

Translated From the Chinese by Kwei Chen

The evening bells are ringing . . .
Words of divine talk . . .
For whom?

The moon is round and bright . . .
But the Garden of Renown
Stands silent.

Wind blows . . .
Leaves fall at my feet . . .

In my light coat
I walk in the cold . . .

Alone . . .
Above my head—
Tears shining . . .

POETRY AND CULTURE

BY WITTER BYNNER

THE Navajo Indians are supposed to be able, with concerted incantation, to make corn or cactus grow by the minute instead of by the month. Around the seedling they hold a screen of blankets, while they sing their spell. When they move away, the seedling is a few inches high. And so it goes, spell by spell, until the plant or flower is complete. I have seen their ritual and am a disbeliever. This kind of magic is for children, young or old, so credulous of miracle in the outside world that they will always lend themselves to the sorcerer. Poetry is another kind of magic. A true poet is supposed to make a flower of life grow in the heart. It may be a flower of good, it may be a flower of evil. It may be the morning-glory, it may be the deadly nightshade. The true poets are the priests of the inner miracle, and I have seen their ritual, and I believe. There is all the difference in the world between these flowers in the heart and the flowers of paper or wax, or even metal, which are fabricated by the craftsman. Dust gathers fast on the flowers of the craftsman, but the inner flowers are fadeless, and breathe their own clarity.

Like most of us who have been schooled in this western world, I was afforded in my youth a study of culture flowing mainly from two sources, the Greek and the Hebrew. I had come to feel that poetic literature must contain streams from one or the other of these two sources: on the one hand the clean objective symmetrical athletic beauty of the Greek, on the other hand the turgid subjective distorted elaborated beauty of the Hebrew. Like my fellow students, I had been offered nothing of the literatures of the Far East. I am still doubtful that I could ever feel any real adherence to the ornate and entranced literature of India; but I have come by accident into as close touch with Chinese poetry as a westerner is able to come without a knowledge of the Chinese tongue. And I feel with conviction, that in the matter of poetry I have begun to receive a new, finer, and deeper education than ever came to me from the Hebrew or the Greek.

Centuries ago, cultivated Chinese had reached the intellectual saturation which has tired the mind of the modern European. The Chinese gentleman knew the ancient folk-songs, compiled by Confucius. He knew also, all about him, a profoundly rich civilization, a more poised and particularized sophistication than we westerners have yet attained. Through the Asian centuries, everyone has written verse. In fact, from early imperial days down to these even worse disordered days of the republic, the sense of poetry has lasted among the Chinese people as a natural and solacing part of life. Whether or not the individual may form or enjoy his poetry in metrical shape, he is constantly aware of the kinship between the beauty of the world and the beauty of imaginative phrase. On any Chinese mountain-climb toward a temple, rock after rock with its terse and suggestive inscription will bear witness to this temper. So will the street-cries of the peddlers, or the names of the tea-houses, and, on many hilltops and lakesides, the casual but reverent jottings of this or that anonymous appreciator of natural beauty. When Whitman said, "To have great poets there must be great audiences too," he must have had in the back of his mind enriched generations like the Elizabethan in England—or like almost any generation in China. In those great audiences, each man, to the limit of his capacity and with natural ease, was a poet.

There is a simple secret in these generations. It is told in a pamphlet written by a venerable Chinese scholar still living in Peking, and still with infinite passion adhering to the precepts of his ancestors, and with infinite patience, acceptably expressed by the way among foreigners, adhering to his conviction that foreigners impair the health of China. His name is Ku Hung-ming. His pamphlet, written in English, one of the five languages of which he is master, is called *The Spirit of the Chinese People*. He sees the reason for the eternal youth of the Chinese people in the fact that the average Chinese has managed to maintain within himself the head of a man and the heart of a child. On this brief he is absorbingly interesting, explaining the continuance of Chinese culture, the only ancient culture still racially existent. My immediate concern with his brief is more special. I detect in it something that he does not specify: a reason for the continuance of poetry alive among his people, and, more than that, the best reason I

know for the existence of poetry anywhere among cultured races.

Music may be the most intimate of the arts, I am not sure. Except for simple melodies, music is beyond the reach of any individual who is not a technician. Painting and sculpture are obviously arts expressing themselves in single given objects, which, although they may be copied and so circulated, are for the most part accessible only to the privileged, or to those who make pilgrimages. Poetry, more than any other of the arts, may be carried about by a man either in his own remembering heart, or else in compact and easily available printed form. It belongs to any one. It is of all the arts the closest to a man; and it will so continue to be, in spite of the apparent shocks given it by the noises of modern commerce and science and jazz.

It has been an age-old custom in China that poets, even the best of them, should devote their earlier years to some form of public service. Century after century, Chinese poems reflect this deep devotion of their authors to the good of the state—their unwavering allegiance to righteousness, even when it meant demotion or exile or death. In these modern western times, there have been periods when poetry has seemed to be a candle-lit and closeted occupation. I venture to surmise that poetry written in that sort of atmosphere grows with time less and less valid, less and less noticed. As a matter of fact, the outstanding English poets have been acutely concerned with the happiness of their fellow-men, and have given themselves warmly to public causes in which they believed. Similarly, present-day poets in America, with amazingly few exceptions, have clustered to the defence of noble souls at bay like Eugene Debs, or have been quick to protest against doubtful justice as in the case of Sacco and Vanzetti. This sort of zeal may not result in poetry of a high order immediately connected with the specific cause; but there is no question that, but for this bravery, this heat on behalf of man's better nature, there would not be in the hearts of the poets so fine a crucible for their more personal alchemies.

Let me say a general word as to the characteristic method of the best Chinese poetry. I am not referring to the technical tricks by which a Chinese poet makes his words balanced and melodious. The discovery which has largely undone my previous convictions as to the way of writing poetry has rather to do with

use of substance than with turns of expression. Mencius said long ago, in reference to the Odes collected by Confucius, "Those who explain the Odes, must not insist on one term so as to do violence to a sentence, nor on a sentence so as to do violence to the general scope. They must try with their thoughts to meet that scope, and then they will apprehend it." In the poetry of the west we are accustomed to let our appreciative minds accept with joy this or that passage in a poem—to prefer the occasional glitter of a jewel to the straight light of the sun. The Chinese poet seldom lets any portion of what he is saying unbalance the entirety. Moreover, with the exception of a particular class of writing—adulatory verse written for the court—Chinese poetry rarely trespasses beyond the bounds of actuality. Whereas western poets will take actualities as points of departure for exaggeration or fantasy, or else as shadows of contrast against dreams of unreality, the great Chinese poets accept the world exactly as they find it in all its terms, and with profound simplicity find therein sufficient solace. Even in phraseology they seldom talk about one thing in terms of another, but are able enough and sure enough as artists to make the ultimately exact terms become the beautiful terms. If a metaphor is used, it is a metaphor directly relating to the theme, not something borrowed from the ends of the earth. The metaphor must be concurrent with the action or flow of the poem; not merely superinduced, but an integral part both of the scene and the emotion.

Wordsworth of our poets comes closest to the Chinese; but their poetry cleaves even nearer to nature. They perform the miracle of identifying the wonder of beauty with common sense. Or rather, they prove that the simplest common sense, the most salutary, and the most nearly universal, is the sense of the beauty of nature, quickened and yet sobered by the wistful warmth of human friendship.

For our taste, used as we are to the operatic in poetry, the substance of Chinese poems seems often mild or even trivial; but if we will be honest with ourselves and with our appreciation of what is lastingly important, we will find these very same poems to be momentous details in the immense patience of beauty. They are the heart of an intimate letter. They bring the true, the beautiful, the everlasting, into simple easy touch with the human, the homely, and the immediate. And I predict that future western poets will

go to school with the masters of the T'ang Dynasty, as well as with the masters of the Golden Age of Greece, or with the Hebrew prophets, or with the English dramatists or romanticists—to learn how best may be expressed, for themselves and others, that passionate patience which is the core of life.

It is not necessary that culture bring about the death of poetry, as it did in the Rome of Virgil. The cynics are wrong who see in our future no place for an art which belongs, they say, to the childhood of the race. The head of a man and the heart of a child working together as in the Chinese have made possible with one race, and may make possible with any race, even in the thick of the most intricate culture, the continuance of the purest poetry.

I WROTE UPON YOUR HEART

BY HELEN BAKER PARKER

I wrote upon your heart; but now I write no more.
My folded hands are ivory upon my breast.
In yellowed satin, with the little waist I wore
So long ago, is this my quiet body dressed.
I wrote my name upon your heart. Now I am done.
My word shall know effacement in a little while.
Red moons will not remind you, or the rising sun,
And you will cease to wonder at my graven smile.
I smile—Years after I am scattered to the light
Your heart, washed by the acid of some bitter day,
Will shed the feeble lines another one will write
And I, forgotten, shall appear. I shall not stay;
Others will write. But sometimes, underneath, my name
Will stir, though I am ashes, wrapping you in flame.



PORTRAIT OF A GIRL. BY FRANK DOBSON

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LIZZIE BALIZE

BY LYLE SAXON

EVERY negro for five miles around Yucca plantation knew her, and when folks saw her striding along the road in her starched grey calico dress and black sunbonnet they would say: "Yond' go Lizzie Balize." But if she carried a basket covered with a white cloth, they would add: "Aie yie! Somebody sick 'roun yeah."

She nursed white and black alike; it was her business, and she could cure hysterical women just by a brew of herbs—her own concoction; but the women couldn't forgive her for curing them; it's awesome to be screaming and falling in fits—people coming from miles to see—but nobody pays attention if you are only vomiting, and that's what happened if Lizzie gave you her brew. Women didn't send for Lizzie Balize unless they were mighty sick.

She had little to do with the other negroes and hardly ever went to church. When she did go she sat up stiff and stern; she never shouted or clapped her hands or patted her feet like the others. She was too proud—though she was as black as anybody, and ugly too. Her cheeks were spattered with white scars like rose petals and she had a trick of passing her hand over her face as though she were trying to brush them away. Folks said they were the marks of smallpox.

She lived with her son on the bank of Cane River, about half a mile from the crossroads store. The cabin stood back from the road and to get to it you had to walk a long way between the furrows. She had lived there twenty years, ever since she came first to the plantation, when Bull was nothing but a baby. Even old Aunt Dicey, washwoman for the white folks at the big-house, couldn't find out anything about her and if Aunt Dicey couldn't there was no use asking about her. But she hadn't been at Cane River a year before folks got to know her as a sick nurse and granny doctor. In spite of that she had few friends. She just didn't mix with folks; that was all there was to it.

Bull had grown to be a big lazy boy, as black as the back of the chimney, slow-moving and good-natured. It was his burly body that gave him the name and he was proud of it. "Dat ole boy is sho' built lak a bull!" the other boys said when they went in swimming with him in the late afternoon.

But in spite of his fine body, Bull didn't care for women. True, he tripped up the girls in the furrows—as the others did—and sometimes would go drinking and sporting on Saturday night. But usually you would find him in the evening, lying on the floor of Lizzie's gallery in the shadow of the gourd-vine—halfway naked, halfway asleep, slapping at the mosquitoes that whined over him. And Lizzie just spoiled him to death, folks said, waiting on him hand and foot, feeding him like a fattenin' pig. Just the same, even old Aunt Dicey granted he was willing enough behind the plough, and the little strip of land that Lizzie rented on shares from Mr Guy, the owner of Yucca Plantation, grew as much cotton as anybody's acres.

Sometimes Aunt Dicey would come over in the evenings and smoke her pipe in the moonlight on Lizzie Balize' gallery, while Bull lolled on the floor humming to himself.

"Funny 'e don' fool wid wimmin mo'," Aunt Dicey ventured. As she rocked back and forth and plied her black-bordered palmetto fan, Lizzie Balize answered: "Shucks, ole woman, Bull ain't got wimmin on his mind."

It was true enough. Some of the nigger boys were just like animals. On Saturday nights you could hear them howling and yelling in the fields, and you could hear the girls squealing. It was scandalous and a shame, Aunt Dicey said, ignoring the fact that when she was a young wench she had screeched as loud as any.

Lizzie passed her black hand over the scars as though to brush them away: "It don't bother me none," she said. She rocked back and forth and plied her fan against the mosquitoes. "Yo' know, Dicey, the ole folks haz got a sayin'—Ah wonder ef yo' knows it?—Dey say dat de 'ooman what looks for nassiness smells nasty. Better watch out!"

Dicey hoisted herself up from her chair and put her cold pipe into her apron pocket: "How come yo' sass a 'ooman two times as ole as yo'?" she snorted. Then when she had eased her heavy body down from step to step, "It's dese heah shut-mouth, lazy, stay-

at-home mens yo' got ter watch! Yo' jus' wait till de right gal come dis way and see how Bull goin' tuh behave! Ah've knowed sons smash down da' own mammies w'en dey got love-crazy." And she walked to the gate grumbling to herself.

Lizzie sat rocking in the moonlight, moving her fan back and forth and looking down at Bull as he snored there beside her.

One night as Bull lay sleeping and Lizzie was slapping at mosquitoes, a woman on horseback rode up. She looked so pale in the moonlight Lizzie thought she was a white woman, but she saw that the horse belonged to her neighbour, old John Javilee. No mistaking that calico pony. The girl was sitting sidewise on a man's saddle and she was wearing a shiny light dress and a Cape jasmine stuck back of her ear. When she reached the gate she said:

"Mis' Lizzie, kin Ah come in a minute?"

Lizzie answered with the usual greeting to a visitor on horseback: "Yas'm, sho' kin. Won't yo' git down?"

The girl slipped from the saddle and trailed up the walk, careless-like and slow. The lamplight was shining through the open door and Lizzie could see who she was. It was that bad one, Nita, who had made so much trouble two years ago that the white owner of the plantation had run her off the place. Now she was back again, wearing a silk dress, too. Lizzie's voice hardened:

"W'at yo' want comin' heah dis time er night?"

The girl didn't answer, but came slowly up the steps, dragging her pink dress after her. She almost stepped on Bull who lay sprawled in the moonlight with his mouth open. She drew back with a cry, and Bull sat up, rubbing his eyes and staring at her.

But the girl's business was conducted inside the cabin with Lizzie. Women's business. Finally she climbed on her horse and rode away. When Lizzie came back to her chair, Bull began to ask questions.

Lizzie was not communicative, though bitter in her accusations against the girl. "Jus' a low-down sport-woman," she said. "Dat's all Nita is."

"Is she name Nita . . . ? Dat's pretty."

That made Lizzie angry. She told Bull all the bad things she had ever known about Nita, and she was in a position to know. Nita had fooled with white men at the store; it had made Mr

Guy so angry he had sent her packing off the place. Everybody knew it. She was just plain worthless.

Afterwards she was sorry she had said so much. It was white folks' talk and she knew Bull didn't care what Nita had been.

He lay awake a long time that night; and lying beyond the thin board partition, Lizzie couldn't sleep either.

Well, it wasn't a week before Bull and Nita were the talk of all the black men who sat along the store gallery at night, smoking their pipes and gazing at the moon as it hung like a red-hot stove lid above Cane River. It was crazy weather and Bull was a crazy man. He slept all day and never went into the field. And he was gone all night.

When Lizzie spoke to him he didn't answer; he just sat looking out across the cotton rows at the heat waves rising like steam from a pot. His eyes were bloodshot and his mouth hung open like a conjured man's. Nita had taught him to love her; he was possessed, as folks get possessed with devils.

You can't draw water from the well if you sit all day on the bucket, and it wasn't long before Mr Guy's overseer rode over to see why Bull wasn't ploughing in the cotton-field. Lizzie said he was sick and the white man rode away only half satisfied.

That week Nita came to live in Lizzie's cabin. The black men on the store gallery didn't know what to make of it. And wouldn't have believed it, if they hadn't seen Nita sitting there alongside of Lizzie Balize in the moonlight.

And it wasn't a month before trouble began. Nita was always wanting things, dresses and shoes and hats, and if Bull wouldn't give them to her, other men would. Lizzie had saved a little money; it was sewed in her mattress, and Nita found out about it. She begged Bull to get it for her. Lizzie finally gave in. In another week there were only some empty bottles and a sleazy red silk dress to show for it.

And daily Nita grew more restless. She would sit dreaming in the doorway, looking out along the cotton rows: "What's de matter, honey?" Bull would say, following her gaze, and she would answer: "Seems tuh me everything looks so pitiful-like out heah."

"Yas, it do," he would agree sullenly.

"It ain't never looked pitiful to yo' befo', Bull!" Lizzie said, bridling.

Sometimes there were quarrels in the light of the smoky lamp, and once in defending Nita, Bull sent Lizzie sprawling on the floor, just as Aunt Dicey had said he would; and crying bitterly his mother crept into bed without another word.

Lizzie was glad when Mr Guy sent for her to come over at night and sit with his wife; she had been having malaria, and there was nobody to wait on her. It was easy and the pay was fair. Bull and Nita were left to themselves.

That was just what Nita wanted, and within a few days she had persuaded Bull to leave Cane River and go to the saw-mill seven miles away to work for cash. Mr Guy told Lizzie that she was a fool to let her son leave the share-land in the middle of the season. Bull and Lizzie had promised to take care of these acres for a year, but Lizzie could do nothing and finally Mr Guy had to take the land and they got nothing for their six months' work. Bull knew what it would mean if he left—but he went, and Nita and Lizzie were left alone in the cabin. Bull would come home Saturday night and leave before daylight Monday morning.

And it wasn't a week before Nita was slipping other men into Lizzie's cabin at night, while Lizzie was away. The black men gathered on the store gallery, wondered what Lizzie would do when she found it out; she had always been so straight-laced and respectable. Bull was a fool, tricked by a yellow woman. Aie yie! They had seen things happen before. But they felt ashamed for Lizzie, all ignorant of things. When she passed by on her way to Mr Guy's that night she heard a smothered guffaw from the black men lolling on the gallery and guessed what it meant. She felt so low and broke-down she could hardly walk past. And all night—her last on duty—by the ill white woman, she brooded. She wanted to die. She had lived too long. Jesus and Bull had turned their backs on her. In her mind these two were somehow connected; she had worshipped them both.

As she was going home, shortly after sunrise, her money in her apron pocket, Aunt Dicey called to her and told her what Nita had been doing. Lizzie didn't say anything. She just stood looking out over the cotton-field. Finally, when the old woman

stopped talking, Lizzie passed her hand over her scars and without a word went stumbling down the path between the furrows.

Nita lay across Lizzie's bed, asleep. There was a burnt hole in the sheet and a cigar butt on the floor beside the bed. The cabin reeked of smoke and perfume, but it was the cigar butt that roused Lizzie's anger. She sprang at the sleeping girl and shook her:

"Yo' low-down sport-woman!" she shouted, "Ah'll tell Bull an' he'll kill yo'!"

Nita, only half awake, screamed: "Tell 'im! Tell 'im, an' see ef I keer! An' see ef'n he'll believe yo'!"

Knowing which Bull would believe, Lizzie turned away baffled, and after a while began to clean the cabin. Hate hung like a curtain between them.

It was Wednesday and Bull wouldn't be back till Saturday night. Lizzie wondered how she was going to stand it till he came, but Nita seemed to have no cares. The shadow of the well measured four o'clock as she walked along between the furrows to the gate, and looked off down the road. By and by she came back and stood in the doorway, staring at Lizzie who sat listless in a corner.

"'Tain't no use in us sittin' heah fussin' till Sadday night," Nita said lazily, "so Ah'm goin' off. Ah'll be back befo' Bull gits heah. He done promise me ten dollars. We goin' tuh have us a time!"

There was a sound of buggy wheels in the road and a man whistled sharply. Nita turned and waved her hand, then looked back at Lizzie and said: "Well—good-bye."

Lizzie did not raise her head, but sat mumbling to herself.

She was alone in the cabin. The smoky lamp threw its ring of light on the white ceiling, but the corners of the room were dark. She was not doing anything. Her hands, usually busy, hung limp between her knees. Little white moths flew round the lamp; mosquitoes whined. It was airless, and from the trees by the door the odour of rotten figs came in. Sickly weather.

She was alone now; strangely enough she did not care. It was finished. But there was the misery in her head; thinking wouldn't let her rest. Studying out things was too much. She had tried praying but it did no good. God had forgotten her.

Hour after hour she sat listening to the night sounds; a cow lowing somewhere beyond the river, and a night bird repeating its mournful call. Then suddenly she shivered; from close by came the chitter of a screech-owl. The signs all against her. Just now a dirt-dauber's nest had fallen from the ceiling on her bed. That meant death. Aunt Dicey's dog had howled; and now this screech-owl. It was too much. Lizzie walked to the door. She could see two birds in the chinaball tree, and shaking her apron at them cried: "Shoo! Shoo!" There was a flutter of wings and they were gone—two streaks against the sky.

She looked out over the cotton stalks massed in the moonlight. Here and there a blossom hung pale against the night, and far off a rooster crowed—faint and clear. It was nearly midnight. Why couldn't she sleep? What was happening out there?

She went inside again, closed the door, and began, heavily, to undress. She lay down and looked up at the smoky lamp; she could hear the mosquitoes. Then at the sound of the gate and of fumbling on the porch, she raised herself and called:

"Who dat?"

There was a muttering outside, something slumped against the door, and she knew it was Bull; but when she saw his face she reeled.

"Oh Jesus . . ."

His face was covered with whitish blisters. It was smallpox. Somehow she got him to bed—moaning and delirious; he kept asking over and over: "Wha's Nita?"

She undressed him, on her own bed, and began putting wet cloths on him. His head was hot, and his tongue thick. Somehow he had walked the seven miles back to the cabin. Until dawn she tried one homely remedy after another, but by the time the sun rose she knew that she must have a doctor.

As soon as she heard the first shouts in the field, of men ploughing, she went outside and called. A black man left his mule and she asked him to ask Mr Guy at the store to telephone for the doctor to come; she had the money and could pay him. But the man must have guessed something, because it was not much after ten when Mr Guy's overseer rode up: "Bull!" he called, "Answer me, you Goddamned nigger!" Lizzie went outside to explain: "Bull's mighty sick."

"Tell that nigger to put his head out of the window," the overseer shouted, cursing her.

Bull was moaning and turning in bed but Lizzie helped him to sit up, and the overseer looked through the window.

"Jesus Christ!" He drove spurs into the horse and his face was pale as he galloped away.

Lizzie knew the word would travel up and down Cane River, as it had travelled five years ago when a whole family had been wiped out. She had nursed them and she knew how the thing terrified everybody, white and black. She wondered if the doctor would come. He did come, late that afternoon—not into the room though. He left his buggy in the lane and walked up through the cotton-field. He talked with her and finally came as far as the door. He left some ointment and quinine and told her what to do. She must make a smudge to keep out mosquitoes and flies and she must keep Bull from scratching at himself. She went into the yard and cut down the clothes-line and tied Bull's hands to the bed.

Bull kept moaning—the same thing over and over. "Nita . . . Nita . . ." His tongue was black and swollen and Lizzie would draw cool water from the well every half hour and give him little sips of it. She thought Aunt Dicey might come over to help; she had nursed her so many times; but at dusk when she heard the rumble of wheels and looked up, she saw Aunt Dicey sitting on a trunk in a wagon while a half grown boy whipped the slow old horse. She was moving and didn't even look toward Lizzie's house.

Lizzie realized that nobody was going to help her. It was just Lizzie and Old Death wrestling for Bull. Well, she had a lot of strength left. Maybe she could pull him through.

He was worse in the night and kept moaning for ice. Early in the morning she started up the road, her money clutched in her hand. The black men on the store gallery dispersed as she came. Some ran down the road, and some mounted and rode off. Before she got to the store, the clerk came out and waved her back, calling: "Don't you come here! Stop!"

She stood ankle-deep in the dust and said: "Please suh, could yo' spare me a piece o' ice? I kin pay for it—wid cash money."

He hesitated, then said: "Stay where you are."

Presently he came out and put some ice on the edge of the gallery and asked: "Anything else you want, Lizzie?"

She named some groceries and they were placed alongside the ice, in an old sack. When the man had retreated Lizzie picked up the package, laid the money on the edge of the gallery, and went away. From down the road as she looked back she saw the clerk pouring disinfectant on the money.

Bull grew worse and in his delirium was calling Nita. As his strength ebbed his passion for her seemed to grow. That night he never stopped moaning. Lizzie longed to kill the girl. It was Nita. She had forced Bull to go to the saw-mill to work so he could buy silk dresses for her. She had fooled him and now when he was brought low, she was gone.

By Saturday Lizzie knew Bull was going to die.

"Oh Gawd, Oh Jesus, lissen," she prayed, ". . . jus' a minute, Jesus . . . jus' a minute. Oh Jesus . . . lemme git Nita for 'im . . . lemme git 'er, so he can die easy."

A buggy rattled by in the road. Was it the doctor? It was the middle of the night. Had Jesus heard her prayer and sent Nita back? She went outside. The buggy had stopped and Nita was climbing out. She swayed drunkenly between the cotton rows, her silk dress trailing out behind her. Lizzie went to meet her. There was some good in the woman, then. She had come back to nurse Bull. "Oh Nita," she said, "Yo' is jus' in time."

Nita stood swaying there in the moonlight: "What' yo' mean, I is jus' in time? Is Bull inside?" and she laughed a little defiantly.

She did not know then what Bull had. In some strange way Nita was the only person that didn't know. Lizzie, sick with weariness, could not think it out.

"Wha—wha—is 'e sick? Wha's matter wid 'im?" Nita stopped beside a yellow rose-bush. "Is 'e got some catchin' sickness?"

They stepped over the threshold. Bull lay on his back, his breath coming in gasps. The odour of smallpox filled the room, but a card stuck against the lamp shaded the bed. Nita went close, staggering a little, to look. "Bull . . ." she said, "it's me, honey. . . . It's yo' Nita."

Lizzie turned the lamp so it shone full on his face. For a moment Nita gazed transfixed, then sprang to the door and with a bound was down the walk. But Lizzie was after her, running

with her head forward like an animal. She caught her as she was fumbling with the gate, grabbed her round the waist, and without a word the two women wrestled. But the thin young mulatto was no match for the negro woman; together they fell to the ground—Lizzie's fingers closing around Nita's throat, pressing harder.

When the other had stopped struggling Lizzie carried her into the house, untied Bull's wrists, and with the cord tied Nita down beside him. She stood holding the oil lamp and looking at them as they lay there. Nita was regaining her senses, moaning now and turning her head from side to side. She was like a crazy woman when she realized what had happened. Then she quieted down, cried, prayed and begged Lizzie to let her up, promising to stay and nurse Bull, to work for Lizzie—anything. But Lizzie was deaf to her. She did the work, nursed Bull and fed Nita—even lengthened the rope so the girl could sit on the edge of the bed.

She had a few dollars left and every second day she went to the store to get groceries and ice, and walked home again. Folks gave her a wide berth. On the ninth day she called to the clerk that Bull was dead and that he'd better tell Mr Guy to send men to bury him.

They came that afternoon and dug a grave near the front steps in Lizzie's little flower-garden. They were old men, scarred with smallpox, and were not afraid. When they had dug the hole they went inside and helped Lizzie put Bull's body in the rough pine box they had brought. It was then they saw Nita lying in Lizzie's bed, covered with white sores. No one knew she had come back.

Lizzie nursed her as she had nursed Bull and she got better, but her face was covered with red scars.

One day she was able to sit up, and Lizzie pulled a chair out on the narrow gallery for her so she could look past the flower-garden, past the cotton-field to the road where folks were going by. Nita had asked for a mirror, so Lizzie left her while she went to the store to get it. It would cost a dollar.



STILL-LIFE. BY MARKO VUKOVIĆ

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ENGLISH APHORISMS

BY LOGAN PEARSALL SMITH

II

IN one of his note-books Coleridge wrote, "I should like to know how far the delight I feel, and have always felt, in adages and aphorisms of universal or very extensive application is a general or common feeling with men, or a peculiarity of my own mind." The delight of our great English critic has apparently not been shared by his countrymen, since, as I have said, our rich store of aphorisms has been so slightly regarded. It is indeed difficult to regard as anything but preposterous Lord Morley's statement that "with the exception of Bacon, we possess no writer of apophthegms of the first order." Bacon, however, if by no means the greatest, is at least the earliest of our English aphorists. He not only collected in his apophthegms a large number of other people's sayings, and also wrote in his *De Auxiliis* many Latin maxims, but he embodied as well in his essays many saws and aphoristic sentences. His essays have been called a mosaic of aphorisms, and many sentences of this kind are to be found in his *Advancement of Learning*. In these aphorisms of Bacon we already find two characteristics which mark the English as contrasted with the French aphorism. The French aphorism is often the expression of the bitterest pessimism. Many of the sayings of La Rochefoucauld, of Pascal, and above all of Chamfort, seem to be written with sulphuric acid and to scorch the page on which we read them. Vitriolic sayings of this kind are, however, rare in English, and are replaced by a kind of practical and prosaic worldliness which is almost more distasteful than the profoundest disillusion. Bacon's maxims are for the most part concerned with the means of personal success in courts and politics—good advice, as Blake said of them, 'for Satan's Kingdom,' and they smack of what Bacon himself called the wisdom of rats and foxes. He is concerned with the externals of character and conduct, rather than with an analysis of the inner motives of human

nature; and in his preoccupation with worldly success, he has been followed by many other English aphorists, from Halifax and Chesterfield to the prudential saws and shopkeeping maxims of Benjamin Franklin. We find also now and then in Bacon's sayings another and contrasted quality, which Sainte-Beuve, in his essay on Chesterfield, noted as a characteristic of English aphorists—an element of imagination and poetry in their wit. Although for the most part dry, jejune, sententious, Bacon's phrases flash like jewels now and then; 'Revenge is a Kind of Wild Justice,' he writes; 'Faces are but a Gallery of Pictures: and Talk but a tinkling Cymbal, where there is no Love.' Bacon's sentences, however, being written before La Rochefoucauld had found for the aphorism its perfect form—before it had become the custom to polish phrases and print them by themselves—are as a rule somewhat wordy, and lack the conciseness and finish of the aphorism at its best. They possess however a merit which is one of the greatest merits in this way of writing, they are authentically his own; 'Reading maketh a full Man, Conference a ready Man; and Writing an exact Man;' 'Wives are young Men's Mistresses, Companions for middle Age, and old Men's Nurses;' these pithy, familiar sayings bear the indisputable mark of the mint-master who has coined them.

The next English aphorist after Bacon is another great lawyer, John Selden, and his *Table Talk* is well known for its sound good sense, its homely English wit and humour. It is also, like Bacon's *Essays*, a treasure-house of worldly wisdom, and presents a very vivid picture of the habits and thought and modes of expression of a learned, hard-headed, liberal-minded, but rather scornful English lawyer. Selden, more than any English aphorist, expresses that contempt for women which is often a characteristic of this class of writers, who, since they have all been men, have naturally, as Dr Johnson said, put the blame on women for 'making the world miserable.' It is right, this legal authority tells us, that a man who will have a wife should meet her bills, 'for he that will keep a Monkey, 'tis fit he should pay for the glasses she breaks.'

Misogyny could hardly be carried further; but aphorisms of this unamiable class are not numerous in English, and Mrs Poyser, our great female aphorist of fiction, answered these masculine libels on her sex with pungent adequacy, when she remarked,

"I'm not denyin' the women are foolish; God Almighty made 'em to match the men."

Selden did not write his aphorisms; they are sayings noted down by his secretary from his talk. Conversation is indeed one of the main sources of the aphorist; and it is generally when minds clash in talk together that these sparks are struck out—that these witty sayings find their perfected expression. Many collections of sayings have been made from the table-talk of famous persons, of Luther, of Goethe, of Johnson, and Coleridge; and more than one Greek or Chinese sage has, by one single remark, achieved immortal fame. La Rochefoucauld's maxims were polished in Madame de Sablé's salon, and some of Pascal's also; Rivarol and Chamfort were famous talkers; and Joubert's *Pensées* were largely suggested by his conversations with Fontanes and Chateaubriand, and come to us clarified by these brilliant minds and filtered through them. The wealth indeed of aphorisms in French, and their shining quality, is largely due to the supremacy in talk of that social nation, and their deliberate cultivation of the arts of human intercourse. The great flood of delightful talk which has flowed for so many centuries through the salons and palaces of France has left behind it on the shores of time a bright sediment of imperishable sayings—of shining pebbles and iridescent shells rounded and polished by those waves.

Our next great English aphorist, George Savile, Marquis of Halifax, was one of the most famous conversationalists of his age. Lord Halifax, who was born in 1633, was a great statesman, in whom was embodied that moderation, that political good sense which is John Bull's most admirable characteristic; but in whom, as his editor, Sir Walter Raleigh, has said, we enjoy the rare delight of finding John Bull a wit. Lord Halifax's wit, which alarmed his contemporaries and seemed to them a fault of character, may have injured his influence in practical affairs, but we cannot but be grateful for it, as it gives a brilliant quality to his writings, and again and again flashes out in his aphorisms. These aphorisms, which were written between 1690 and 1695, after La Rochefoucauld had started the fashion for this way of writing, but which were not published till long after Halifax's death, form the most notable collection of aphorisms which we possess in English, our nearest parallel to the French collections of this kind. Into these maxims—there are more than six hundred of them—

Halifax distilled the essence of his thought and observation. In his political maxims, in all he says of kings and ministers of parliaments and mobs and parties, he tells us, as his editor has pointed out, many things which other politicians know but never say; and taking us behind the scenes, he shows us the wires which move the bedizened puppets that play their parts upon that illustrious scene.

'State-business,' he tells us, 'is a cruel Trade; Good nature is a Bungler in it.' 'It is the Fools and Knaves that make the Wheels of the World turn. *They are the World*; those few who have Sense or Honesty sneak up and down single, but never go in Herds.' 'The Government of the World is a great thing,' we are assured by one who played a notable part in it; but, he adds, 'a very coarse one, too, compared with the fineness of Speculative Knowledge.'

To his Political Aphorisms Halifax added a large number of 'Moral Thoughts and Reflections' treating without illusion, but without malice, most of the stock subjects of the moral aphorist, Man and his passions, his youth and age, his knavery and self-deception and his folly.

Halifax, like other authors who possess the aphoristic turn of thought and expression, often enriches with aphorisms his essays and other compositions. His Advice to a Daughter, written before her marriage for his daughter Elizabeth, who afterwards became the mother of another famous aphorist, the Earl of Chesterfield, is full of wise and disillusioned sentences, which picture the world as it is, and offer no great hopes of happiness. Lady Elizabeth's husband, he seems to suggest, will very likely be a spendthrift, or a libertine or drunkard; but the best she can do is to turn a blind eye to his failings, rejoicing indeed that he is not without them, 'for a Husband without faults is a dangerous Observer.' As to her children, she was to have as strict a guard on herself among them, as if she were among her enemies; a wise remark, as Sir Walter Raleigh says, but not one, he adds, which makes home seem a cheerful place.

The more one reads Halifax's writings, the more one is impressed by their interest and importance. His Character of Charles II is a masterpiece of portraiture, equal to anything in Saint-Simon's memoirs; his Character of a Trimmer is full of the profoundest political wisdom; and the aphorisms scattered throughout his essays are, with his Thoughts and Reflections, among the best in our own or any language. They are sometimes poetic in

their expression and enriched by shining images: 'There is a Smell in our Native Earth, better than all the Perfumes of the East'; 'Esteem to Virtue is like a cherishing air to Plants and Flowers which maketh them blow and prosper'; our frailties 'pull our Rage by the sleeve, and whisper Gentleness to us in our Censures'—in phrases like these we find that imaginative quality which Sainte-Beuve noted as characteristically English.

It is, however, their subtlety of thought, their profundity of observation, more than their phrasing, which impresses most the reader of Halifax's *Thoughts and Reflections*. We note certain sayings which strike us at the first perusal, and when we read the book again, others and still others, begin to gleam on the page and darkly shine, like little wells in whose depths some truth is half apparent.

We are told by a contemporary that many of Lord Halifax's reflections occurred to him suddenly in conversation with his friends; we cannot but ask ourselves, however, who of his contemporaries were worthy to be the friends and intellectual companions of this spiritual son of Montaigne, who was nourished on his essays, and who appears to us a somewhat lonely figure amid the world of the Restoration, in the politics of which, nevertheless, he played a part of such importance, although, both as a statesman and an author, his name is barely remembered now.

The name of the next great aphorist on our list, Halifax's grandson, Lord Chesterfield, has not been obscured by Time; yet Time, by tarnishing it, has treated it with even more injustice. To be distinguished and forgotten—or rather to have one's name live on, as Halifax's has lived, in the memory of a few distinguished spirits—this is a much more kindly fate than to glare before the public in the lime-light which a series of unlucky incidents has cast upon the figure of Lord Chesterfield. The most damaging, in the eyes of posterity, of these incidents, is the famous clash or encounter of this piece of delicate porcelain, with one of the weightiest vessels and hugest iron pots that ever swam in English waters. Dr Johnson's letter to the patron who had failed him, full of immoderate, barely-deserved, but immortal indignation, would suffice to sink any reputation; and another giant of our literature, Charles Dickens, has in his character, or caricature of 'Sir John Chester' dealt, with almost equal force and unfairness, another blow at this accomplished but un-English figure. The incident, however, which most shocked Lord Chesterfield's contem-

poraries, was the publication after his death of his letters to his son. The son was illegitimate, and the letters intimate; designed though they were for a particular character and a special purpose—to prepare namely a shy and awkward boy, born out of wedlock, for the diplomatic service, and teach him the good manners indispensable in that career—they were read as if they contained everything Lord Chesterfield regarded as necessary to form a complete system of moral education for the young.

Few things are more shocking to those who practise the arts of success than the frank description of those arts: that one should practise what one preaches is generally agreed, but any one who has the indiscretion to preach what both he and his hearers practise must always incur—as Lord Chesterfield has incurred—the gravest moral reprobation. Lord Chesterfield was a man of the world, and avowed himself as such; like his grandfather he had played an illustrious part in public affairs, and had also preserved, what so few who play such parts preserve, an uninjured reputation. His knowledge of men and affairs, of the causes of success and failure, were the fruit of much experience and profound observation. As the grandfather had wished to do for Chesterfield's mother, so the grandson, with an impulse apparently hereditary in the family, desired to do for his son, to impart to him the acquired knowledge of a lifetime, and supply, by his own experience, the boy's ignorance of the world. This world, which the old nobleman knew so well, the world he had mastered and enjoyed, and which, having retired from it, he viewed with complete disillusion, was that limited but lucid world of eighteenth-century society which reached its most shining perfection in France, whence its illumination spread over the rest of Europe. Of this finished culture, this achieved civilization, this rational epicurean mastery of the art of living, Lord Chesterfield was the most accomplished and finished representative in England. He was as much at home in Paris as he was in London; Voltaire and Montesquieu were his friends, as well as the diplomatists and great ladies of the Paris salons; he shared the rational enthusiasms of the French thinkers, as well as the cynical wisdom of France's statesmen; he was, unlike Lord Halifax, completely at home in the age in which he lived; breathing its air and basking in its golden sunshine, he enjoyed to the full the fruits which were brought to ripeness by them. Among the fairest of these fruits

was a certain exquisite art of social intercourse, a delicate perfection and grace of bearing and conversation, a gentleness and amiability in the art of pleasing, which was no growth of the English soil, but could only be acquired abroad. Most young Englishmen of condition were, in Lord Chesterfield's opinion, little more than louts; they had made indeed the grand tour abroad, but had learnt nothing from their travels, on which they had herded together in drunken debauches, returning home as refined and polished, he said, as Dutch skippers from a whaling expedition. That his son, and also his godson and heir, to whom he addressed another series of instructive letters, should not resemble these unlicked cubs, but become accomplished young men, fitted to adorn their age and country, was Lord Chesterfield's great desire and the purpose of his letters. These letters were not, he said, the severe and discouraging dictates of an old parent, but the friendly and practicable advice of a sincere friend, who remembers that he has been young himself, and knows the indulgence that is due to youth and inexperience. 'Yes,' he adds, 'I have been young, and a great deal too young. Idle dissipation and innumerable indiscretions, which I am now heartily ashamed and repent of, characterized my youth. But if my advice can make you wiser and better than I was at your age, I hope it may be of some little atonement.'

Lord Chesterfield's letters, which he wrote as an atonement for his youthful errors, and which to many have seemed a strange atonement, are full of worldly wisdom and advice which find a terse expression in the many aphorisms which adorn their pages. Besides these scattered maxims, he composed for the instruction of his son, a set of aphorisms which are printed by themselves.

'Most maxim-mongers,' he says, in his preface to this collection, 'have preferred the prettiness to the justness of a thought, and the turn to the truth; but I have refused myself to everything that my own experience did not justify and confirm.' His aphorisms are indeed sincere expressions of his own thought and observation, but they are often little masterpieces of the literary art as well. Inheriting as he did his grandfather's gift for terse expression, and nourished as he was on La Rochefoucauld and La Bruyère, whom he continually quotes, and believing, as he believed, that form was as important as matter, and that indeed it was the form rather

than the content of a phrase which impressed it upon us and fixed it in our memory, he had given a life-long attention to the art of expressing thought in words. His aphorisms float sometimes on the wings of images—'Cunning,' he says, for instance, 'is the dark sanctuary of incapacity;' Wit, those who possess it, should wear like a sword in its scabbard, and not 'brandish it to the terror of the whole company;' the art of life was to make the world one's bubble, rather than be the bubble of the world.

But of all the wings of winged sayings—and aphorisms must have wings to make them fly from mouth to mouth—the neatest are woven of a kind of verbal felicity, which Chesterfield called the 'turn.' The 'turn' is generally a deft antithesis of phrasing, by which some antithesis of thought is echoed and reinforced. 'It is very disagreeable to seem reserved, and very dangerous not to be so'; 'the weakest man in the world can avail himself of the passions of the wisest'; 'Many a man would rather you heard his story than granted his request'—these among many others are instances of the antithetical turn in Chesterfield's aphorisms. An antithesis is not, however, indispensable to the turn; often this verbal felicity is produced merely by the happy repetition of one word:—'let blockheads read what blockheads wrote,' for instance; 'What pleases you in others will in general please them in you.' In the art of using the 'turn' Chesterfield's model was La Rochefoucauld, who sometimes combines the antithesis and the repetition in one finished phrase, as for instance when he says, 'We can often forgive those who bore us, but we cannot forgive those we bore.'

Although Lord Chesterfield was a master of the turn, he did not allow, as he says, the turn to be his master, and thus he avoided another pitfall of the aphorist, that of pretentiousness, of using a verbal felicity to give an appearance of thought where thought is lacking. When, for instance, Disraeli, who often fell into this pitfall, remarks 'nobody should even look anxious except those who have no anxiety,' the turn of expression he uses gives a momentary look of depth to an extremely shallow observation.

We have only to look at Sainte-Beuve's luminous portrait of Lord Chesterfield, with its sympathetic interpretation of this accomplished figure, to realize that our accepted notion of him is a caricature of the coarse old English kind. Sainte-Beuve, who calls Chesterfield the La Rochefoucauld of England, describes him as one of the most brilliant minds of our country, and as an accom-

plished moralist—using the word in the wider and more humane sense which it preserves in France—a moralist, not of Zeno's or Cato's school, but of the more amiable school of Aristippus or Atticus. His letters, Sainte-Beuve says, were letters that Horace might have written to his son, if Horace had been a parent; he praises the spirit they breathe of tenderness and wisdom, the paternal affection of this patient, delicate, indefatigable father, striving to make out of his indolent and awkward son an accomplished man of action. If, after reading the essay of this fine critic, we recall Dr Johnson's saying that Lord Chesterfield's letters 'teach the morals of a whore, and the manners of a dancing-master,' we find ourselves in a very different critical and moral atmosphere. But even Dr Johnson in a less exasperated mood was too enlightened not to admit that Chesterfield's correspondence, expurgated of what he considered its immoral precepts, would make a book which 'should be put into the hands of every young gentleman.'

Lord Chesterfield was supposed to have described Dr Johnson as 'a respectable Hottentot'; and the phrase, though apparently not meant for Johnson, was taken by their contemporaries as representing what the polite nobleman thought of the uncouth scholar. These two notable eighteenth-century figures lived indeed in worlds very different from each other; each was famous for his wit, but while Chesterfield regarded this quality as a possession dangerous for its possessor, Dr Johnson, disporting himself in a less polished sphere, was hampered by no such scruples. To shine in conversation was in him, as Sir Joshua Reynolds said, a predominating passion; he fought on every occasion as if his reputation depended on the victory of the moment; and he fought with all the weapons. Among those he wielded with complete recklessness that shining sword of wit which the politic earl had said should be kept safely in its scabbard, and not brandished to the terror of the company. The strokes of this mighty Samson still reverberate in history; still he strides like great Hector sounding war's alarms among the dead; but we feel no pity for his victims. Time has changed into delight the terror of those lightning strokes of repartee; we listen safely across the intervening years to their thunder. But more than by his wit Dr Johnson still lives for us, and his voice still reverberates in our ears, as the master and monarch of wise sayings. He is the greatest of our English aphorists—indeed for the number, the originality of his apophthegms he has no equal in the world; there is no talker of ancient or modern times

of whose general observations about life so many are remembered and constantly repeated. We owe the profusion of this store of course to his indefatigable and incomparable biographer; but their most enduring quality is the immense common sense, and the weight of experience and feeling behind them. They have their sources in the depths of deeply-feeling nature; they are full of the knowledge of the good and evil in his own heart, and in the hearts of others. With this concrete experience of life was combined an extraordinary generalizing power, a wide grasp of thought, a power of applying general truths to particular occasions, of seeing little incidents in the illumination of large ideas, and of being inspired by them, as he said himself, to very serious reflection. A tub of butter when contemplated by the actor Munden, amounted, Charles Lamb wrote, to a platonic idea; and the most trivial object or occurrence when contemplated through the magnifying glass of Dr Johnson's mind, assumed gigantic proportions; he went through life making mountains out of molehills. This gift of aggrandizement, of bestowing what he called the 'grandeur of generality' upon his sayings, was due in part to a vocabulary which was the product as well as the organ of that gift. 'He that thinks with more extent than another,' he wrote, 'will want words of larger meaning,' and his large acquired store of sonorous Latinisms served well to express his extensive thoughts. This power of clothing his thoughts in words adequate to their ample meaning, was the product of a life-long effort; he had early made it a fixed rule, he told Sir Joshua Reynolds, 'to do his best on every occasion and in every company; to impart whatever he knew in the most forcible language he could put it in,' and this had become, he said, by constant practice habitual with him. His notions, one of his listeners writes, 'rose up like the dragon's teeth sowed by Cadmus, all ready clothed and in bright armour too, fit for immediate battle,' and only occasionally Boswell enables us to see him pausing for a moment to give his thought a still more impressive form.

Dr Johnson's aphoristic gift—and the power of generalizing observation and abstracting from it imposing truths is the very essence of that gift—is apparent in his earlier writings, in *Rasselas* and *The Rambler*, and his other essays are rich in the substance of aphoristic thought. Although their expression in these passages is often ponderous and diffuse, there are some of them which, from their weight of meaning and the perfection of their phrasing, deserve to

rank as aphorisms; for the aphorisms of La Rochefoucauld and the other masters of this art, though generally brief and pointed, are sometimes more ample in their form—paragraphs and almost little essays of distilled and essential thought. No literary form admits indeed of precise and strictly formal definition; long sentences may be sometimes aphorisms; but the briefer they are the better; and it is for the most part in the recorded conversation of Dr Johnson's later years, when his weapon of speech had been tempered in the fire and vociferation of innumerable verbal contests, that his sentences acquire their point and perfection. Thus, for instance, in one of the *Ramblers* he writes, 'The time present is seldom able to fill desire or imagination with immediate enjoyment, and we are forced to supply its deficiencies by recollection or anticipation.' Twenty-three years later, arguing with Boswell and Langton at General Oglethorpe's, he expressed this thought in a much more vivid manner by saying 'a man is never happy for the present, but when he is drunk.'

There are no aphorisms that bear more clearly than Dr Johnson's the impress of their maker; these massy coins are authentically stamped with his imposing wig and features. Johnson awed his contemporaries not only by the 'loud voice and slow deliberate utterance' which Boswell so well describes; they were also impressed by the wit and wisdom of his remarks, but above all by the fact that it was he who made them. The weight of his extraordinary character, with all its amazing contradictions, gives them a resonance and importance that strongly affect us. Most sages and most aphorists have achieved a consistent attitude towards life; like La Rochefoucauld, or like Chesterfield, or like Goethe, they have mastered both themselves and the world, small or large, in which they dwell, and this gives a kind of uniformity—sometimes a kind of monotony—to their sayings. But Dr Johnson had achieved no such harmony; he was not in this sense a master of the world or of his own nature. He lived, as he tells us, entirely without his own approbation; he was continually forming resolutions and continually breaking them, and it is Boswell's supreme merit that he had the courage to reveal the contradictions and failings of his hero's character. High acts and noble qualities may win our respectful admiration, but it is after all people's errors, as Goethe said, which make us love them; and some of Johnson's eulogists have wronged his memory by trying to make him into a consistently

noble and enlightened figure. Johnson was fond also of paradox, and his most paradoxical remarks were accurately recorded; and when Boswell, wishing to be sure that none of them should escape him, enquired whether he had said that 'the happiest part of a man's life is what he passes lying awake in bed in the morning,' Dr Johnson replied, 'I may perhaps have said this; for nobody, at times, talks more laxly than I do.'

The self-confessed contradictions between Dr Johnson's principles and his practice—the way, for instance, he preached, and, as he said, very sincerely preached, early-rising from an habitual bed of noon-day sloth—and all the other contrarieties of his character; his liberal sympathies and his fierce, narrow, party-spirit, his profound unhappiness and his amazing zest for life, his bluff common sense and his primitive superstition, and almost insane terror of death—all these contrasts, and the various vistas into life they opened for him, enabled him to grasp those glimmerings of truth and odd aspects of experience which are the aphorist's nutriment—the game he hunts, and the object of his pursuit. But of all the contradictions of Dr Johnson's nature, what makes him our supremest aphorist as well as most endears us to him, is the contrast between his craving for affection, his dependence on it, and his profound sense of the weakness and fragility of all human ties. 'We cannot be in his company long,' as Mr Desmond MacCarthy has finely said, 'without becoming aware that what draws us to him so closely is that he combined a disillusioned estimate of human nature sufficient to launch twenty little cynics, with a craving for love and sympathy urgent enough to turn a weaker nature into a benign sentimentalist.'

The next aphorist on our list, though a younger contemporary of Chesterfield and Johnson, seems to belong to an age very different from theirs. If a saying can create a world—and the universe we inhabit was thus, we are told, originally created—one saying of William Blake's seems to transport us into a sphere of thought and feeling as remote from that of these eighteenth-century figures as the furthest planet. Blake's Proverbs in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, with the other aphorisms scattered through his prose writings, are indeed remarkable achievements, and contain, as Swinburne said of them, the quintessence and fine gold of his alembic. 'Each, whether earnest or satirical, slight or great in manner, is full,' Swinburne adds, 'of that passionate wisdom and

bright rapid strength proper to the step and speech of gods.' Swinburne seldom indulged in understatement; but Blake's Proverbs of Hell are certainly little masterpieces of this delicate art. No other aphorist has succeeded in compressing greater depths of meaning into fewer words; and save for a few apophthegms of the Greek Sages—'Know thyself,' 'Seize the moment,' 'It is hard to be good,' 'Most men are bad'—it would be difficult to find in any literature sayings more brief and pointed than 'Damn braces. Bless relaxes,' and many other of Blake's tiny but pregnant maxims.

The ground covered by Blake's aphorisms includes the three kinds of experience which, as we have seen, form the subject-matter of this way of writing. Some of them are commonplaces, new-minted and given a fresh lustre by their phrasing and imagery: 'The busy bee has no time for sorrow'; 'The fox condemns the trap, not himself,' for instance. Others contain bits of experience with which we are not unacquainted, though no one else has embodied them in words. But Blake's most characteristic sayings belong to that rarest and most precious class which seem like new intuitions, seem to have been coined from a vein of gold hidden far below the surface of the familiar world: 'the soul of sweet delight can never be defiled,' for instance; 'weak is the joy which is never wearied'; 'the road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom.' Blake is remarkable among other aphorists in many ways, but most remarkable in that his proverbs have often a mysterious oracular quality; they seem to us pregnant with a kind of mystic meaning, although we are hard put to it to say exactly what that meaning is. 'One thought fills immensity'; 'The tigers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction'; 'Eternity is in love with the productions of time'—phrases like these impress our imagination with a kind of awe, although reason may suggest that they are perhaps little more than nonsense phrases. But Blake is a poet among our great aphorists; his phrases were coined in the mint of the imagination, he speaks, not with the voice of disillusioned age, but with that of romantic youth; and it is in reading one of his sentences, full of light and poetry, that we can best appreciate La Bruyère's saying that 'a delicate thought is the finest product, and, as it were, the flower of the soul.'

(To be concluded)

GAMBIT ENDING

BY DON LOCHBILER

In the angling rain
the grey rocks moved again,
leaves fell like cast skins.

Memory's lash escaped
the crusted eye, kept
clean the thirsting roots.
The tree her slender thoughts

found no satiety
of hand or leaf,
live twig or finger's teem
or vessel's flame.

Clawing light
coiled with glass,
shaving wind
turned shafts of grass.

Half of the hollow
wind went free,
wedge of no arrow
cleft the tree,

only the core
of the stream returned
when the dust destroyed,
when the water burned,

after the marriage
of leaf and stone
filling the turf
and the tree with sound,

rutting the earth
a shadowy road,
weeping the death
of the fretted god.

SECOND DECLAMATION

BY KENNETH BURKE

WHEN people are both discerning and unhappy, they tend to believe that their unhappiness is derived from their discernment. For how may we dare to solicit the kindliness of Providence, we who have killed many bugs? In seeking causes to exist, one should not scruple at the choice of allies, and if noble motives seem weak, let him be quick to hunt out ignoble ones. We may be encouraged to continue purely by the thought that our death or default may later be turned to wholly praiseworthy purposes. Life is most difficult for those who are gnawed at by the morbidity of justice, particularly if their own ambitions and appetites force them into unjust actions. We must be content to possess only as much of nobility as resides in the contemplation of it, while yet remembering that such an equipment will not enable us to live on better terms with our neighbours. The world is made more tentative if all sagacious things are said by despicable people, and all stupid things by the lovable—and wisdom, in becoming a kind of self-appointed martyrdom, constitutes the sage's one claim to coxcombray. Could we, by deliberateness, by refusing to do otherwise, come in time to imagine a less defensive kind of living, and even to acquire something of that geniality which is most intelligently advocated in the books of the sick? Or could we call despair a privilege without implying that mankind should show it preference over happiness when the choice could be settled by a toss? No one's discomfitures are above suspicion, for those who possess neither a great man's power nor his torment, record their own maladjustments at length in the belief that they are somehow displaying the rest of greatness.

I have considered the highly selected breeds of cattle which are most prized when grossly overweighted with beef, or so hypertrophied and distorted in motherhood that the naturally brief sparing flow of the mammae is prolonged and made excessive, as women in certain regions of Africa are deemed beautiful whose thighs and buttocks have become enormous from disease; and I have realized that men beneath the same sky, with the same readings of ther-

mometer and same averages of rainfall, are bred to vastly differing environments, so that frailty may be but the outward aspect of exceptional vigour and tenacity. The apparently weak are merely schooled to other strength and may be easily enduring hardships which are intense and even still unnamed. While the man who triumphs has done so by acting in accordance with other rules, like one who would win at tennis by shooting his opponent.

If life moves with sufficient slowness, or is relentless enough in its consistency for us to awaken day after day upon the same issues, we may contrive to keep our terminology abreast of it, at least to the extent of being able to avow, in written, spoken, or meditated speech, any surrenders which were forced upon us in actuality. What we have been compelled to do, we find it easy to admit. Accordingly, it costs me little effort to tell you that I have many times cherished details of your life as though they were my own; that not only in the loose talk of bar-rooms, but in the solitude of my thoughts, I have occupied myself with such transferences, saying not "he" but "I," and peopling with experience places which I am entitled to recall solely as objects. I have knelt as you would kneel, though aware that you yourself did not put sufficient content into the posture to find it difficult. On one occasion, when I had overstayed myself, and suddenly realized that the two of you were waiting for me to leave, the abruptness of this disclosure was imposed upon me like some overtly unpleasant act; and I remained still longer, as though to bury it in further sociability. And I have since stood in that room, and seen the door close behind me, heard my footsteps diminish in the hall and, in your person, turned smiling to my companion. Yet though I have thus drearily mimicked you, I can say with authority that your enviable condition arose from absurdities unperceived, from your failure to hamper your own life by certain self-questionings which insufficiency alone can enable one to neglect, though their presence bespeaks more powerlessness than quality. We were living in no status of outward peril, such as earthquake, attack, or flood, which would have made your instinctive manner adequate.

Oh, were I to leave some heritage of good counsel for the young, my code would advise the striving after such privileges as are not obtained through deliberation nor discipline, but could only be bestowed by hazard. "Go thou, young man," I should begin—and those things which I should tell him to go in quest of, would be

such as no quest had ever yielded. By watching you, I learned that blessings fall as manna, which feeds the trivial because the great have prayed. And by unescapably living with myself, I learned that when rewards are commensurate with efforts, they find us already too exhausted to enjoy them and too dispirited through the practice of long patience to feel assured that they will not be taken from us. You drew forth the good things of life like a magician pulling rabbits out of a hat. They came to you, that is, regardless of your character.

But I, who should have considered it my mission to make life more difficult for both of us, laboured instead to continue your good fortune. On seeing you so far entrenched in ways which I myself should have chosen, I was led by a kind of moral pedantry to make those aspects of your career over which I had some influence remain consistent with all that was independent of me. And nothing so much as the thought of my own unreasoning collaboration confirms me in my conception of you as one unjustly sunned upon and favoured.

Among those times when I lay sleepless, I should mention first our night at the farmhouse. I had not wanted to stop here, yet you insisted. Did you spontaneously know that this was the place for your purposes, or could you have turned any other equally to advantage? I was prepared to go with you down to the river, when I observed that plans of your own were already under way. I wandered through the barn alone—and later, coming upon the hired man, I asked him questions about the crops and learned the parts of a harness. It was also at this time that I made friends with the collie, whom I called old Fritz and buffeted into growling good humour. You were now well along the shore, and the hired man explained to me that your guide had returned recently from a convent which, I gathered, she had attended not in the interests of religion, but of delicacy. As evening came on, I sat waiting for you in our room, smoking in the dark by the open window. It was a long vigil, preponderantly a period of sound. The clock in the hall struck deep and sluggishly—and after each hour had been thus solemnly proclaimed, it was repeated in a hasty tinkle from the parlour. Our room too possessed a heart-beat, sometimes in the ticking of my watch, and sometimes in my own pulse. "I am waiting," I thought, "like a wife," with the exception that your return would comfort me purely as the cessation of your pleasure. With

this girl, I had noticed, there was a slight convulsion of the nostrils, a suddenness of breathing, when certain words were spoken. Yet in so short a time I could not perceive anything in common among these words but their effect, and I took them to betray some state of mind which in its deeper aspects was closed to me by unimaginativeness or lack of experience. It seemed to indicate a conflict between eagerness and retreat, as though she had included much within her scheme of the repugnant and the illicit, and yet by a powerful gift of sympathy was made constantly prone to weaken her own resistances.

At last you entered, bearing your disturbance like an emperor. I turned away, that no more might be conceded you, that your expressions should go unseen. "We must leave," you whispered, "leave quietly—not by the hall but through the window and down over the porch." Now we were allies, if not in our adventures, at least in our escape! And as I sat up in silence, you added, "She is hysterical." We left money by the unlit lamp, and in the yard I proved that I too had spent a profitable evening by having made friends with old Fritz who, at my whispered assurances, permitted us to go unmolested. And as we walked in the grass by the roadside, doubtless even the girl herself did not know that we were leaving.

Thus the two cronies trudged along through the night, while you tossed me the crumbs and bare bones of your evening. But eventually you grew critical, and proved to me at length why this girl was inferior to Florence, why she could not make Florence seem any less desirable, and in time your talk became one enthusiastic paean to Florence; until, as we arrived at the next village, and learned that you could telegraph from here, at your suggestion we sent her our joint compliments and expressed the hope that we would soon be with her.

There are many now who talk of so standing that the waves alone are in front of them, and the very vessel on which they advance is behind the outer limits of their vision. And I recall the words of a man (I did not like him!) who saw a great poet, now dead, hurrying along the city streets, suffering from physical pain, and through thinking of other things allowing himself to act as though the stresses of his mind and body could be outpaced. Travellers looking to improvement have testified to going long distances, and changing all the outward aspects of their life, and

yet finding that they awaken to no new internal dawn. Despite motion, philosophy, medicaments, the one unchanging self remains, to feed upon its store of remembered injustices, of stupidity triumphant, of suicidal worth, of resentments which, even though they may lead to the hilarious and the absurd, are none the less burdensome to their possessor. There was even the time when I talked with anguish in a public phone booth, and while Florence listened to words as desolate as my talent and my predicament could make them, I was grinning into the mouthpiece that the man beyond the glass, waiting to speak here next, might not suspect my condition. And on another occasion, when she discovered tears in my eyes, they had been unloosed by nothing more deserving than an accidental tap of a curtain string against the bridge of my nose as I stood at the window. These trumped-up tears I displayed as evidence of my unhappiness, and I can assure you that they were not deceiving. They lay in the otherwise stony eyes of one who knows that as a heavy bolt of lightning will, in its discharge, clear an entire countryside of electricity, similarly those near us who absorb good fortune must thereby detract it from ourselves.

BLOOD

BY STANLEY BURNSHAW

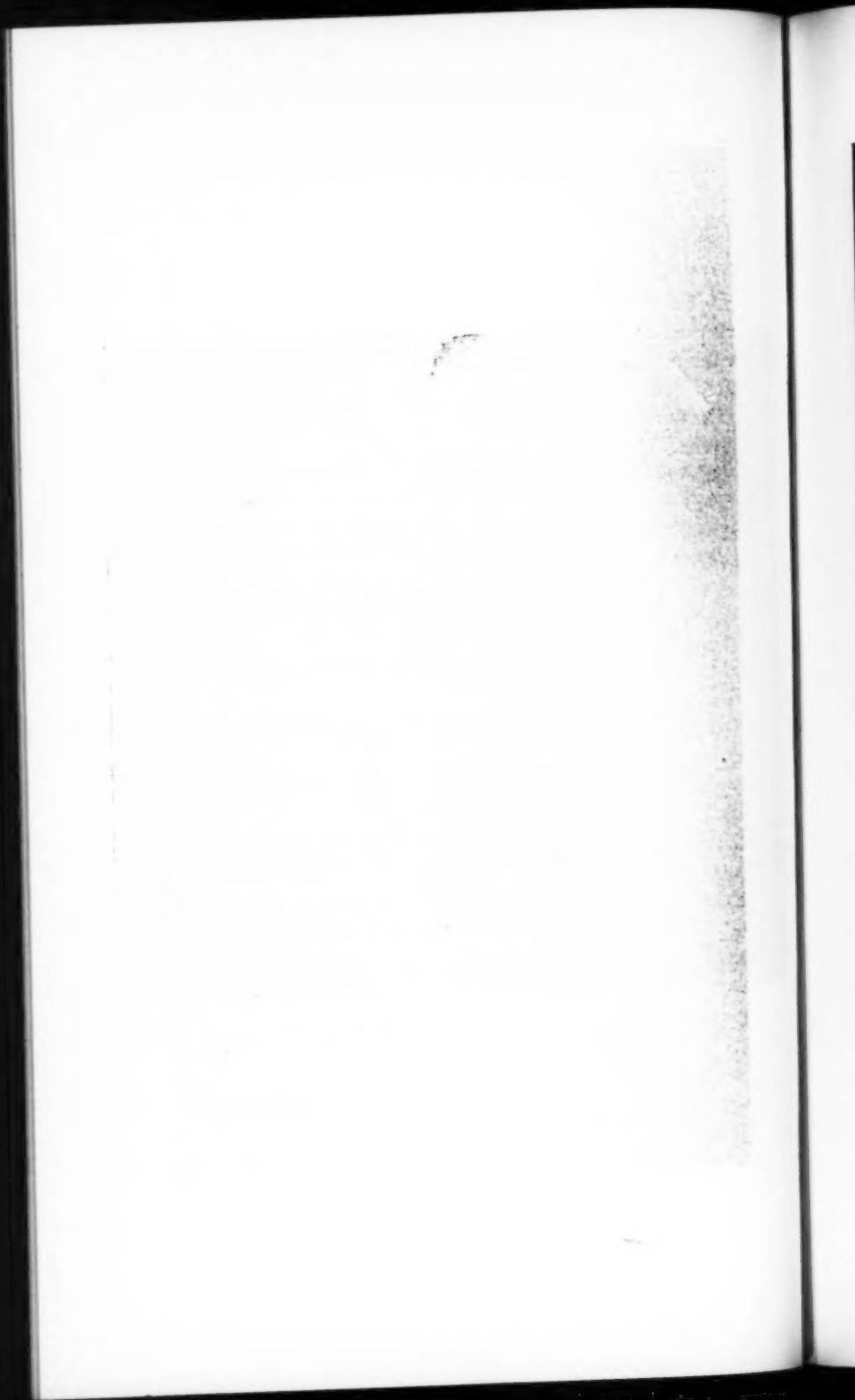
Cats move like water,
 Dogs like wind. . . .
 Only when our bodies
 Have shut out mind
 Can they learn the calm
 Motion of dream.

Would we could know
 The way men moved
 When thought was only
 The great dark love
 And blood lay calm
 In a depthless dream. . . .



Courtesy of the Galerie Simon, Paris

LES SALTIMBANQUES. BY PABLO PICASSO





Courtesy of the Galerie Simon, Paris

L'ACTEUR. BY PABLO PICASSO

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SURREPTITIOUS PEEPS AT CELEBRITIES

BY DOUGLAS L. MARTYN

MANY golfers have paused on the thirteenth tee of the Rye Golf Links, in the midst of a losing struggle with bogey, to gaze with relief at the charming old-world town—the church, poised solidly on the pinnacle of a little hill, with the grey-tiled houses around it, like a mother chicken with her brood of young; so stolid, remote, and immovable.

When I was young, one of my first solo walks took me up winding cobble-stone streets to the lovely Landgate Tower, one of the four entrances into the old walled town. Here, all unknowingly, I experienced my first moments of aesthetic joy. Its Cassandra-like top, a glorious mass of richly scented yellow and brown wall-flowers. What rapture I used to feel! In the years that followed I would sometimes dream I was the old clock half hidden among the flowers.

How often had it pealed to the sound of musketry when repelling a French attack! While the striking-hour must have given the signal to many a smuggler. Could that immobile face but talk, give its impressions of Edward I or Queen Elizabeth, of John Fletcher, of Henry James, of Cromwell and The Iron Duke, and hundreds of other celebrities, what a book we should have!

After a while, becoming bolder, I journeyed further afield. I discovered Ypres Castle, a quadrangular building supported by four towers, built in the twelfth century, a relic of Stephen's time. I would think for hours about the first Earl and his archers, and in fancy would even see the molten lead pouring upon his too venture-some enemies. What days!

From beneath its walls you can catch a glimpse of the twin village, Winchelsea. It is about two miles across the marsh, usually half hidden in its rich mellowed charm. Somewhere amidst its foliage dwelt Dame Ellen Terry. The townsfolk of Rye still speak of Winchelsea in relative terms as a new town, because it was rebuilt by Edward I on the present spot about two miles inland.

I used to retrace my steps by way of Watchbell Street, delightful and unchanged for centuries. By degrees I overcame my fear

of the huge old church; it gave me a feeling of sanctuary. Partly Norman, its dominant note is peace. The gilded words high up over the clock:

"Time is but a shadow,
Which forever passeth away,"

admirably express its philosophy.

Inside hangs a wonderful pendulum, almost sweeping the floor. I once heard the verger telling some visitors that it was new, a present from Queen Elizabeth. The beautiful stained-glass windows abundant in virgins and haloes, breathe subtly of pre-reformation days. Examining the church records we find that during the vacillations of those times the sum of thirteen shillings and sixpence was paid to cleanse the church of popery; while receipts for money paid for replacing the virgin over the altar-piece, and knocking it down again, frequently occur, testifying to the source of Britain's strength in diplomacy.

Mermaid Street! Where can you find its peer? A cobble-stone lane, descending at an angle of forty-five degrees, its heavily timbered old overhanging gables will no doubt be there when the Woolworth Building is no more. Each year it inspires hundreds of artists to forget the poverty of their art. Half-way up is the Mermaid Inn, now a mecca for golfers, with its rumbling secret interiors and beautiful open-fire hearths.

At the top is the house in which Mr Henry James lived for so many years, and where I believe Mr Wilder now intends to dwell. Wedged between the church on one side and the Old Mermaid on the other, with an enclosed garden at the back, it might well suit the originator of Uncle Pio. Surrounded by romance and antiquity, Mr James' detached personality must have enjoyed many hours of bliss in this fragment of a world which lives on so happily in ignorance of the new. Did this simple town influence his style? I wonder. Delightful but sometimes exasperating.

My first conversation with him remains vivid in my memory. My brother and I were playing on the sands one day—building a huge castle and moat—busy in our efforts to beat the tide, when Mr James appeared from over the sand dunes. There was no mistaking his deliberate gait; his thoughts appeared to be leading him forward into another world, very, very, remote. He stopped and addressed me abruptly; a mannerism.

"Boy, at what hour is the tide high?"

"In about two hours' time, sir," I replied.

"Say hence, boy, say hence!"

A second later he was moving forward again, deep in thought, leaving behind him a humiliated little boy. Later, on a few rare occasions, I spent some happy intimate hours in his library. He was most generous and helpful to any that he thought possessed the love of books.

The years passed. I delighted in Dumas and Stevenson; my heroes lived only in books, and my gods were those who wrote them. Wells fascinated me; Chesterton "intrigued" me, although he taught me to laugh.

Everywhere the townspeople were in high spirits, for a circus had come to town—a splendid excuse for mild carousal. Everyone wore an air of excitement. The big tent was already pitched upon the village green. The greeting of the day which for centuries had been the age-old formula, "Howdo!" was temporarily substituted for "Be ye going to-night?" The mayor and aldermen would of course be there, occupying the expensive red plush shilling seats, while the less opulent would sit blissfully content on hard boards for the modest sum of sixpence.

I was wandering around, kicking pebbles and wondering how I could raise sixpence, for my mother disapproved of shows, when my chum came tumbling up, bubbling over with news.

"Mr Chesterton is here! Come on, I'll show him to you." He spoke of the master of paradox as if he were big circus type. We had read his last book and pretended to like it.

"How do you know it is he?" I asked sceptically as we stumbled over tent-pegs.

"Easy; he laughs with a loud guffaw." The word seemed so conclusive that I remained silent.

Dodging the gaping crowds, we reached the spot, only to be informed by a rustic, 'that the big bloke had just gone in.' He had entered, it seemed, one of the many side shows. This particular one promised to be interesting. The village idiot had been persuaded to accept a challenge for a silver cup, which had been on display for the past week at the only barber-shop in town. It was to be a knockout battle between him and a circus man, no quarter given. One to be armed with unlimited soot, the other with red paint; toss for choice. The idea was that each belabour the other with a short-handled mop; it promised to be a delight.

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There was no help for it, I appealed to a higher court for funds—to my father who revelled in Mr Chesterton's weekly column of a Saturday.

When we entered, the fight had started and the crowd was an uproarious riot of mirth. Stripped to the waist the two combatants waged war in primeval fashion, ignoring style for caveman methods. When one momentarily faltered, owing to an unexpected mouthful of red paint, the cup was dangled in front of him by a vociferous master of ceremonies with encouraging shouts: "You're winning! Give 'im 'ell!"

Mr Chesterton was easily discovered amidst the sea of laughing faces—shaking with uncontrollable Gargantuan laughter. Falstaff-like and foremost in the riot as he rippled in ecstasy, he was using an immense handkerchief to suppress incongruous tears. For a little while I thought it derogatory to the celebrity's dignity to indulge in such ribald merriment. I found myself unkindly repeating:

"You will find me drinking rum,
Like a sailor in a slum—"

But I quickly forgot it in the joy of laughter.

A youthful tragedy befell me about this time, perhaps more than youthful. My mother had gone out to visit an old friend who was ill. One of the Huguenot families that had been settled in Rye since the middle of the sixteenth century. With my knees on a chair, my head buried in my hands under a flickering oil lamp, I had been transported to other worlds by the sheer beauty of Shelley, when my mother returned.

"I have brought you a few books."

Books! There had never been enough; they came to the house singly, and in diverse ways; it was unwritten law among us that any that came into the house were mine.

"I brought only the newest," the mater went on in her affectionate inconsequent way, "we burned a lot, they were all that old English stuff, that one cannot understand."

"How could you burn them?" I was looking at my treasures with feverish haste. Five of them made an aggregate of well over a thousand years, and my mother had brought home only the new ones. I felt cruelly wronged, a lump rose in my throat, and I

turned away to hide my tears. My mother looked pained, but smiled the indulgent smile that children hate.

"My son, you never would have understood them, I could not read them myself."

I have the latest of the five before me as I write. History of His Most Sacred Majesty King Charles I. Martyr. John Ashburnham—published 1704—written in 1660.

It was maddening to be obliged to leave Stalky & Co., to go to the grocer's for sugar. Parental authority forbade anything more than shrugs, and sullen demeanour. My feelings were not modified by the grocer who was also the mayor. He seemed reluctant to serve lest his dignity suffer. Standing at the shop door with thumbs negligently caught in his waistcoat under the armpits, he shouted fitfully, once, twice, for Bill who perhaps in the absence of customers was filling his time with odd domestic duties. A customer who had come in appeared excited, and in an awed whisper, said to the mayor,

"Rudyard Kipling is outside, just come out of Deacon's." While Bill, red of face, entered at the back, I rushed out of the front. He was about to step into his car with a friend; the dark smoked glasses with a rather heavy undergrowth kind of moustache, established his identity. I was disappointed. He looked more as I had imagined an anarchist would look. Youth gleans impressions from the eyes and they were veiled. I suspected some of the mysticism of Kim, but for the life of me could not see before me the creator and part hero of Stalky & Co. As if detecting my disappointment, he enquired the way to Battle. So astonished was I, that I could find no ready answer, nor was it needed; an obsequious mayor bowed himself forward. On my way home I called at the library and obtained one of The Jungle Books. Now was the time to read it.

My brother at this time was at work with a contractor in restoring Winchelsea Church, a more beautiful and older building than the church at Rye. Inspired by his accounts of skeletons they were uncovering, one spring morning I took the low-lying road across the marsh to visit him.

They were busy in the chancel when I arrived. Slabs had been removed, and the ground opened up to permit of strengthening pillars. Exposed to view were two coffins. One of them immediately attracted my attention, a huge affair measuring more than seven

and a half feet. With difficulty I made out the inscription: "Admiral Gervaise Haller"—"First Admiral of the Cinque Ports." Musty it smelled in that gloomy hole breathing the odour of death. Since then, on a few occasions during the war, I recalled that dry smell, the breath of the definitely dead, in insufficiently oxygenized space, when it gave me an eerie feeling.

The Admiral's coffin had temporarily to be removed; his bones were threatening the safety of the church. Four men gathered around; it seemed a terrific weight. Quite suddenly one end dropped; the centuries' old oak had given way. The Admiral's skull grinned at us from the inside of the coffin. The solemnity of death had not yet obtruded upon the innocence of my years. To caress a skeleton in all its nakedness seemed the next best thing to chasing a ghost. If I reasoned at all it was to feel that I was looking at the eternal enemy of life in grinning shape, but so infinitely remote that I need not bother about it. I touched the teeth; they were perfect. My curiosity was insatiate. Was I touching lips that hundreds of years ago had perchance inspired passion in feminine dust that barred his path and constituted the furniture of fleeting beauty?

Between the tremulous ribs of the ancient giant, my fingers searched the lead lined coffin for souvenirs. I had read in a vague way of things hidden, confusing the magnificence of Egyptian rites with those for a poor British Admiral.

The skull was badly broken at the back; indeed a modern coroner would perhaps have brought in a verdict of 'Murder'—by one of his own jolly sailors. The men were restive, and looked half frightened. One could almost read their thoughts. 'If that is an Admiral??' They must have found little consolation in their own humble positions. Besides, the boss might come along and view the disturbed warrior and things would not be pleasant. The lid was clumsily mended, but not before I had placed a piece of the skull in my pocket; it would support a fact that must tend with the years to incline towards fiction.

Alas! It was not to remain in my possession. My brother and I used it to replace the always missing white checker in our games of an evening, superbly oblivious as we moved the armoured plate of the Admiral's brains to and fro. Alas! a time came when it was his turn to be lost.



PASTORAL. BY CARL SPRINCHORN

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ITALIAN LETTER

September, 1928

FRANCESCO FLORA'S first novel, *La Città Terrena*, has attracted the attention of critics and of the reading public almost at the same time with that other first novel, Bacchelli's *Diavolo al Pontelungo*; but while the latter book has been welcomed with unanimity of tranquil admiration, the former has met with extravagant and dithyrambic praise in some quarters, and in others with fierce opposition. It would be malicious, however, to try to attribute the difference to the fact that Flora is a militant and outspoken critic of contemporary literature, and therefore subject to either gratitude or resentment from his colleagues, while Bacchelli is a kind of literary recluse; the true reason is deeper, and lies in the nature of their work, since the *Diavolo*, as I tried to show in my last letter,¹ being the fruit of the calm and detached contemplation of the past, is not coloured by any other passion than a purely aesthetic one, by any other interest than a general human interest arising from the varied spectacle of mortal life in every time and place—but *La Città Terrena* is the idealized confession of the joys and sorrows, of the errors and hopes of a passionate child of our times.

Some years ago² I introduced Flora to the readers of *THE DIAL* as a critic and a poet: they may remember that I wrote of him especially in connexion with his book *Dal Romanticismo al Futurismo*, which also, though disguised as a sweeping survey of modern Italian literature, is the confession of a personal and intimate experience of intellectual and moral life. In rapid succession, after a few years of silence, he has given us a book on D'Annunzio, this novel, and a book on Croce. His earlier work had consisted in a reducing of the dispersed and chaotic pre-war literary life to the intellectual and moral norm of Croce's Idealism: these new critical essays might well be considered as its epilogomena, placing D'Annunzio and Croce, in sharp opposition to each other, as the two poles of the present moral life of our country. Flora's critical

¹ May, 1928.

² February, 1924.

interests are identical with his ideals as a poet and as a novelist: the whole of his literary activity is in fact guided by one thought which provides at the same time a rule of conduct and a criterion of truth, that might be defined as the thought of a progressive and perpetual ascent from the world of mere matter and sense—from what is disorganic and lawless—to a world in which sense and matter are not mortified and annulled, but transfigured as aspects of a wider and higher life and stamped with the impress of its spiritual law.

The novel presents in an imaginative form the theme which finds its speculative and historical development in the critical writings, and the close connexion between the two modes of elaboration is still more clearly emphasized by the author's choosing a poet as the hero of the novel: a dangerous choice in any case, because of the possible confusion of the hero with the author, and of the objective and poetic tone with the autobiographical and practical. The ideal image of a poet, as of any rare individuality, can never be made to appear wholly plausible and real unless it is supported by historical data; and even then, the heroic character of a poet lies always entirely in his work, and only by exception in his daily life. A poet's significant history is his poetry, since no man becomes a poet except by abstracting himself from his biography and from the practical communion of men, and by creating in that sphere in which he is no longer the man of passions and desires, but a pure organ of aesthetic vision: the personality of a poet springs from the sacrifice of his individuality. Therefore the poets of fiction can never be possessed, as poets, with full concrete life. Their poetic quality being supposed and not actual, what remains in a novel (witness the favourable instance, because not unsupported by historical data, of that clever novel, Maurois' *Ariel*) is but a pale, shadowy figure, half man or less, with all the vices of the sentimentalist, dilettante, or epicurean. Such are the considerations, I believe, which afford some justification for the charge against *Flora* by some of his critics, that he, though himself keenly aware of the weakness of D'Annunzio's ethical vision, should have now invested the world of his own imagination with a sensuous atmosphere reminiscent possibly of the heavy scents and warm animal breaths of the older poet's novels.

But those critics have not been subtle enough to perceive that *Flora's* sensuousness, though at times overpowering and almost

cloying, remains on a plane totally different from that of D'Annunzio, never going so deep as to affect and corrupt the quality of the aesthetic vision. In fact, the whole of D'Annunzio's work might be looked upon as a series of new Metamorphoses in which man, retracing the stages represented in ancient mythology by deities partaking of two natures, the Fauns, the Tritons, the Centaurs, aspires towards the condition of the animal and of the plant, of the rock and of the sea; in which, as it were, the human spirit, renouncing its divine prerogative, strives to become all and only Nature. Flora, on the contrary, is firmly rooted—not as a thinker only, but as a poet—in the Idealistic position which submerges the whole natural world in the human and divine spirit, in the perpetual miracle of the spirit that creates out of its own substance the object of its contemplation and the conditions of its activity. Of the moral dangers to which a hasty transposition of this speculative doctrine into the world of practical experience may easily lead, no one, I think, is more acutely conscious than Flora himself, and his novel could be summarized as a kind of pilgrimage of the spirit, questing after the infinite wealth of which it knows itself to be the creator, then losing itself in the maze of that infinite wealth as in the "*selva selvaggia ed aspra e forte*" of the Mediaeval Pilgrim, and finally returning to itself humbled and restored within its individual limits by the double evidence of the unreflecting and instinctive morality of simple souls, and of the omnipotence of death.

The whole life-experience of Giuliano Solari, the hero of *La Città Terrena*, culminates in two episodes, if the word be allowed its original meaning and dignity: a woman in love with him finds, through love for her child, the strength to resist his love and is afterwards punished by her child's death, for the sin she has not committed; another woman dies in his arms when he goes back to her after trials and errancy, and the poet is left with a child born of her. It is through this doctrine of the actuality of the spirit, in which he had first found support for his amoralism and superhumanism, that Solari becomes conscious at last of his individual moral responsibility for all that lives and dies around him:

"In the certainty of his thought he found himself again, since it is better to live in sorrow, and even to have wept for desires that had been killed, and for a dead love, if he had seen joy, if his

soul could be tenderly moved by the innocence of his child, by the white head of his mother, if poetry throbbed and blossomed within him again: since it is better to live, better to be transfigured in death, than never to have been born. And he said to his heart: If this is not the voice of the only and true God, certainly He shall speak to the expectant soul, and I shall hear His word of light. Thus Giuliano Solari resumed his life."

The novel ends on this promise rather than in discovery of a new faith, of that religion of our time of which we all know the prophets and precursors, but which still awaits its messiah and its gospel.

The book is new, a book of and for our day, not only because a vision of the world, in a sense the flower of contemporary European culture, finds in it culmination and renovation, but also because its method, the images it employs, the sensitivity which it represents, are closely akin to the sources and modes of expression of the few young writers who in France, in England, in Germany, and in America, are endeavouring to create a language adequate to the complexity of modern experience. Flora does not imitate these writers: as a critic, he tends to regard somewhat scornfully, those he has read; but he is as alert as they are to that "*qualité d'ubiquité de la vie moderne*" which the distinguished French author already mentioned describes as the common subject-matter of "*la jeune littérature*" in France and in England; and similarity of conditions and of interests is after all bound to produce effects if not similar at least closely related. Flora's modernity, however, should not be confused with that rhetoric of literary modernism which is developing in Europe and in America—a limited and peculiar choice of subjects, that is to say; a marked preference for certain states of mind; tricks of language, of grammar, of punctuation, recurrent with slight variations, in all modern literatures, as signals of the truly modern writer. American readers who wish to see the Italian aspect of this international phenomenon ought to read the new magazine "900" (meaning, of course, the twentieth century) which was issued last year in Rome and Paris, under the editorship of Massimo Bontempelli, containing original contributions by Mac Orlan, Soupault, Fargue, Ribemont-Dessaignes, Cendrars, and other young French writers, and French translations from McAlmon, Kaiser, Joyce, Gomez de la Serna, but especially from Bontempelli himself and a few other Italians like Cecchi, Aniante, Alvaro, Solari, and Barilli.

I may have occasion, in some future letter, to write more particularly about some of these writers, but suffice it to say that Bontempelli, who started his career with a volume of well-tempered, classically modelled, almost scholastic verse has, through a phase of violent futurism, reached his present position as a kind of leader of the modernistic movement. A literary virtuoso, a temper sensitive to the rapidly changing tastes and moods of successive generations—since generations, if not epochs, seem now to be succeeding each other at a distance of not more than two or three years, one at the heels of the other—he has now and then been able to strike a note, if not original, certainly happy, as in a series of grotesque and humorous short stories, which are among the best produced in Italy in a *genre* substantially foreign to our national temperament. His later literary tendencies, as shown even by the editorial plan of the "900," were bound to make him favour a sort of literary internationalism, since those peculiarly modern aspects of our life, which he now considers the only possible sources of inspiration for a present-day writer, are common to the whole of western civilization, and are rather more prominent in other western countries than in Italy. It has been easy for his adversaries to bring against him the charge of being at variance with the prevailing, officially countenanced, tendencies of our national culture, and the term *Stracittà*—meaning over-emphasis on the mechanical, artificial, cosmopolite elements of modern life—has been invented and thrown at his head by an eyrie of younger writers, self-styled inhabitants of *Strapaese*, the Italian village *par excellence*, in which the solid virtues as well as the solid vices of our race are supposed still to exist for the inspiration of thoroughly indigenous authors.

This literary guerrilla is fairly hard to follow in its intricacies, because, even to an outsider, it is evidently complicated by motives of a merely practical nature. Bontempelli has given up his international "900," and is now issuing it in Rome in Italian; and has associated himself with nine more writers of a more or less established reputation, among whom are Marinetti and Fausto Maria Martini, the group known as "I Dieci," who are writing a novel in collaboration, establishing prizes for new authors, and trying generally to gain for the literary profession in Italy a status more dignified and self-sustaining than that it has had hitherto. His adversaries, on the other hand, have succeeded in getting hold of our most important literary weekly, *La Fiera Letteraria*, published in Milan, and have waged a vehement campaign against the Dieci

and all their methods and enterprises. Both groups seem to be doing their utmost to secure the monopoly of official support, but the outcome of all their alarms and excursions is not to be easily predicted.

Some more thoughtful writers, in the same *Fiera Letteraria*, have recently introduced new arguments in the polemic between Modernism and Traditionalism, stating, rather surprisingly to me, that what we are suffering from is too much intelligence. Personally I should have thought that any charge but this particular one might have been brought against the majority of our writers of fiction. What goes by the name of intelligence among them is merely a dose of natural wits that would be often deemed insufficient for the average business man or politician; it is amazing, on the contrary, that men living in an atmosphere saturated with the consciousness of critical and historical problems, should remain intellectually so innocent. But the accusation has a meaning if we interpret it as pointing to the excess of programmatic and voluntary elements in modern fiction over the spontaneous and creative; it has a meaning if we apply it, for instance, to Pirandello and to his so-called philosophy, which in reality is no philosophy at all but a chaos of undigested psychological paradoxes, which yet succeeds in vitiating and falsifying the modicum of native inspiration that even his sharpest critics do not deny him. But if the author of this particular charge, who is a young critic of some distinction, Gino Saviotti, had been better trained in the use of critical terms, he would not have said intelligence when he meant intellectualism, a vice born not of too much intelligence (inconceivable when speaking of positive virtues or qualities) but of too little; and he would not have chosen as an illustration for his thesis, Giraudoux, a writer in whom a keen and delicate wit or *esprit* is exquisitely exploited for the creation of an elegant and subtle, ironic and elegiac, *marivaudage* or suite of variations in *sordina*, on the sweetness and sadness, the heartlessness and pathos, of these our too modern times.

That intelligence should necessarily kill poetry is a curious misapprehension, though partly justified by the truism that many minor poets have belonged and belong to the intellectually *minus habentes*. But the only possible measure for the higher poetry is that determined by breadth of moral consciousness and height of intelligence in the poet. Years ago, in my Cambridge days, I made

a close study of the chronology of Dante's *Canzoniere*, and was able to discover stages of lyrical development marked by successive broadenings of intellectual outlook, while poetical inspiration seemed to lag, as being for a time insufficient to enkindle the new matter; then suddenly, with a leap of the flame, it took possession of the wider world presenting itself to the poet, the stages leading him gradually from the juvenile sonnets of the *Vita Nuova* to the miraculous tercets of the *Divina Commedia*, where they can still be traced in lyrical ascent from the *Inferno* to the *Paradiso*; but the conclusion holds true that only minor poetry can be killed by intelligence, and that great poetry can grow only on the soil of a great intelligence.

These considerations may have brought us a little too far from the quarrels and programmes of which we were speaking; but not so far as might seem from Francesco Flora, who is familiar with this mode of thought, being at the same time an intelligent man and a poet. And with him I leave the reader, extracting from *La Città Terrena* a passage which, though losing in translation and out of its context, may perhaps make him feel the quality of a style both modern and traditional:

"And yet, to travel, to multiply space, what a primitive thing it still is! Sailing day after day to touch the edge of the earth, sinking into sand month after month to gain the edge of the desert, while our thought is wholly without barriers of distance or of time, while, even to-day, a sound can be made synchronous to our ears and to those of a negro at the furthest confines of the desert, and of a sailor in mid-ocean! Thus voice conquers matter and space: one man's work has sufficed to accelerate sound-waves, to make them simultaneous at the most various distances. The supreme contemporaneity of earthly things is the destruction of matter; or, better, the redeeming of it to a human, and therefore divine, condition. How shall we not conquer even the weight of our bodies, that mere thought may take us anywhere by an act of the will?"

RAFFAELLO PICCOLI

BOOK REVIEWS

NEW LIVES OF OLD POETS

CATULLUS AND HORACE, Two Poets in Their Environment. By Tenney Frank. 8vo. 291 pages. Henry Holt and Company. \$3.

FROM another critic the sub-title, "two poets in their environment," might well be a warning. Taine's insistence on the rather obvious importance of literary "*milieu*" has too often in criticism been the excuse for much detail that has no literary bearing; and we still have too much crude sociology heaped about poetry. But here is really a study of poets; it bears constantly on their poetry; and it writes their chapters in the history of literature. This is the focus of the archaeology that has lately become an adventure as well as a science; of the metric, and even the occasional grammar, rescued from the pedants; of the social history, yielding significant dates; above all, of a biography that is neither chronicle nor psychopathy.

The superficial contrast between Catullus the "pure" lyricist and Horace the "reflective" lyricist is ignored with many other critical labels. There is no attempt to tell us again the correct things to say about two famous poets. The appraisal of achievement is sometimes even destructive. Horace's ninth epode "has not a single good line or phrase, though it presents an interesting picture" (189). Again, "his ten years of literary effort thus produced only three rolls, and half of this might well have been omitted" (192). But the few cases of destructive re-appraisal are merely incidental to a fresh discrimination. The Epistle to the Pisos "must not be read as Horace's full expression of his poetic creed" (261). "It was not meant to be what later writers have chosen to call it, an 'Art of Poetry'" (275). Such distinctions throw into relief what in each poet is characteristic and significant, and make appraisal subservient to literary history.

The recent revival, for all its vagaries, has reminded us that biography is a fine art. It demands suggestive interpretation of

patiently verified facts in relation to the development of individuality; and the development of a poet is too delicate to be summarized in easy generalizations.

"When Horace's father in the prime of life closed his bank and invested what seemed a meager fortune in order to live on the returns so as to devote the rest of his days to the education of his only boy, he had done a very uncommon thing. He was not an ordinary man. That Horace never forgot. To him it was not trite to say that wealth is dangerous, that it is well to limit one's getting, that there are spiritual values worth more, that natural desires may as well be curbed. When Horace speaks in this fashion and laughs at Rome's behavior, he is remembering his father . . . and he is also parting company with the practical creed of Maecenas and most of the powerful men of Rome" (183).

The larger environment, the pressure of the time on the man, is adjusted expertly. There is none of that laborious digest of history which makes many biographies both dull and unconvincing. Horace's "un-Roman interest in merchants and men of affairs" (135) is derived in a paragraph. Two pages create the human scene of the boy Catullus. The sharpest challenge to this art must have been the difficult but necessary figure of Clodia. That this too-famous lady was the "Lesbia" of Catullus may be dismissed with easy cynicism, or expatiated into either racy description or tragic irony. Here, instead of either of these evasions, is a really biographical relation at once precise and delicate. Clodia and her society, made to reveal each other, are together woven into the story of Catullus.

"She read much in an age when literature was made for men, and she took an interest in her younger brother's ambitions and acquired a taste for political intrigue" (15). "Cicero, despite his hatred of her, constantly refers to her lustrous eyes" (17). His defence of Caelius "threw the onus on Clodia. The speech seethes with innuendo . . . contingent and concessive clauses that would protect him in case of cross-examination. . . . Caelius was acquitted, and Clodia lost the last shred of her reputation" (80).

Such suggestive phrases, like the "bachelor diction" (219) of Horace, are not patches; they all mark the unfolding pattern. So

are those details of the history which are more specifically literary: the actual artistic use of the Greek Anthology, the relation of the revolt against Ciceronian oratory not only to the fall of the Senate, but to the clash of artistic ideals in poetry, the traditional sense of the soil in Horace's references to peasant cults, the deviation of drama into recitation. Even the famous four lines beginning "*Qualis in aerii perlucens vertice montis*" are made to yield fresh suggestion by reminding us of similar anticipations in the English eighteenth century.

"It is one of the most striking landscapes in Latin verse, and may be a reminiscence of one of the many capricious cascades high on the mountain side that one passes in the Adige valley as one travels north from Verona to Trent. . . . Had Catullus written fifty years later, after the mountain folk had been pacified so that the Alps were made accessible to Roman travellers, he might well have discovered mountain landscape as a theme for poetry" (47).

Metric, always essential in the study of poetry, has often been obscured in presentation. From age to age it has been stiffened by pedagogues and disputed by theorists. Here the technical precision without which the study must be idle, and may be misleading, is both guided by reminders of fundamental distinctions and enlivened by analogies.

"Verse based upon quantity—as we may judge from music, which is quantitative—shows more sensitiveness to metrical variety than verse based, like ours, upon stress alone. Moreover, our meters are so few and simple, and these few must do service for so wide a range of expression, that we are utterly unfit to appreciate the fine distinctions wrought by the great abundance of feet and cola in Greek and Latin verse" (269).

The difficult Galliambic rhythm is first related to the dubious Cybele cult and to the Greek setting of the *Attis*. Then it is defined as a "rapid, orgiastic, dance-march rhythm," its typical movement is scanned, and its variations explained. With this clue we read nine characteristic lines. After a warning against Tennyson's imitation, our younger artists, "who have had to learn several new rhythms in recent dances" are consoled.

"Rhythms that have survived have corresponded to the beat or wail of instruments that kept time to leaping, dancing or marching feet. Feet in their movements are fairly well restricted to regular intervals of time; but the timbrels, especially by the use of syncope, can set the arms and head off on a secondary rhythm which clashes with the tread of the feet, or can transfer the beat with more or less regularity from the tread to the lift of the foot. And such effects even to-day are more frequently sought after in Arabic, Berber and Turkish music than in European forms" (75).

In a word, the exposition is carried through. It serves others than the few who already know. It makes technic suggestive. The frequent use of metric for interpretation is the more cumulative because of the steadying conception of verse as essentially rhythm of movement. Kin thus to dance and also to music, it nevertheless has its own technic because it has its own scope.

Beyond this technical expertness Professor Frank is little concerned here to appraise Catullus, even less to rank him. He does, indeed, stress his directness. At its artistic height that quality is so essential as almost to constitute lyric. Has Catullus that height? *Nox est perpetua una dormienda* is recalled again; it must be; it is one of the perfect lines. But it is also final in the sense of comprising the poet's whole scope. He has no vision. Occasional poetry as he conceived it is strictly limited. Even when the lyric intensification is more than physical, it has short range of insight. How far the lack is due to his time is implied in the abundant historical detail. How far insight is a measure of poetry may be inferred as we pass on to Horace and look back. But those who hold it extraneous will hardly be disturbed.

The style, as will be evident from the quotations, has edge; but it shows no anxiety to cut. It is not restless. Recognizing soon the author's scholarly singleness, his faithful intention to display not himself, but his poets, we trust ourselves to a guide who is witty because he is winsome, and tranquil because he knows. The usual things about Catullus and Horace may be read elsewhere. Many of them are worth reading. This book, without trying to supersede them, makes a fresh contribution to literary history.

CHARLES SEARS BALDWIN

MR. WESTON'S GOOD WINE

MR. WESTON'S GOOD WINE. By T. F. Powys. 8vo.
317 pages. The Viking Press. \$3.50.

IN MR. WESTON'S GOOD WINE, a merchant comes to the village of Folly Down to offer to the folk there his vintages. He deals in two sorts, it appears:

"Although we are very glad to see so many take an interest in, and wish to taste, our light and less heady vintages, that are fittest to drink—and there are many who know this—in any gentle and green valley about this time of evening, yet there is still a lack of those who order our strongest and oldest wine that brings to the buyer a lasting contentment, and eases his heart for ever from all care and torment."

The merchant travels through the country in a Ford car, and he has an assistant, a young man who is named Michael. He writes the name of his good wine on the sky in letters of flame; the clocks stop when he arrives in the village. He is an author—in fact, he is *The Author*—and his assistant is an Angel. All whom he has dealings with have some heaven or hell consummated in themselves. *Mr. Weston's Good Wine* is a story that seems to have been written to illustrate with the crudity of a woodcut upon a ballad-sheet the saying, "Closer is He than breathing and nearer than hands or feet," and the other saying about His coming having the casualness of a thief in the night.

We have in this story the English village that is always in Mr T. F. Powys' books, and we have the same assortment of characters—wanton and longing girls, loutish fellows, eccentric recluses, depraved women, harmless devotees, and earth-bound rustics. They never develop as a novelist's creations develop—all that happens to them is that, according to their faculties, they become aware of the mystery of human destiny. There is Tamar Grobe. For her there is no development; there is consummation. There is her maid, Jenny Bunce, whose "young body is as plump as a

robin's, and her eyes look so naughtily into yours when you meet her that it is near impossible to refuse their asking." For Jenny, too, there is consummation—much more ordinary than the consummation to Tamar's desire—Tamar, of whom Mr Weston is told, "The grassy downs know the tread of her little feet and the light pressure, and there is no tree nor bush that would not give all its flowers and leaves—yea, its very sap—to be a man for her sake, because her wishes are so burning." Then there is Mrs Vosper who plots the degradation of the village maidens; there are the brothers Mumby who are more carnal than the beasts; there is Mr Bird who longs to possess Jenny Bunce and who in the meanwhile preaches Christianity to the geese and to Mr Mumby's bull; there is Mr Grobe the rector, Tamar's father, who longs to find again his dead Alice—all these enter into their heaven or their hell as they have dealings with the wine-merchant.

In reading Mr. Weston's *Good Wine*, one wonders what gift Mr T. F. Powys has that makes the reading of his books a real experience. As stories they are incoherent; his people never develop, and obviously they are distorted. And yet, in spite of all that, something of a revelation comes out of all his books. There are writers who can construct a narrative, who can give a development to their characters, and who yet cannot give their characters significance. Mr T. F. Powys can give significance to his distorted characters: that is the first of his gifts. He can also evoke pictures of the English village and the English countryside—pictures that remind one of those left by the great eighteenth-century painters who made pigs at a trough, or men drinking on benches in an inn, scenes to be remembered always. And he puts desire into his books; he is able to make us feel something that is immense and urgent.

His books have defects that could have been got rid of. Mr. Weston's *Good Wine*, like a few of his other books, is about a third too long. It is a fantasy, after all, and a story that is much longer than *Candide* is too long for a fantasy. And the desire that is back of his books, that gives his books their urge, often becomes sick and morbid. Many of T. F. Powys' characters are uncongenial, not because they know the violence of sexual desire, but because they know nothing else. Sex to them is an obsession, and in actual life we try to get away from people with obsessions.

T. F. Powys' books are never constructed as narratives. His

plots are merely a trellis over which his imaginings trail as vines trail. For all his outer unlikeness to them he has more affinities with the great confession-writers than he has with the story-tellers. I feel that when I write down this sentence from Amiel's *Journal* I will be stating the theme of Mr. Weston's *Good Wine* and of the other books:

"An indifferent nature? A Satanic principle of things? A good and just God? Three points of view. The second is improbable and horrible. The first appeals to our stoicism. . . . But the third point of view alone can give joy. Only is it tenable? . . . To nature both our continued existence and our morality are equally indifferent. . . ."

Like this great confession-writer, T. F. Powys is an explorer of the inner life, and an explorer especially at the point where the inner life seems to sink into the life of nature. Like him, he is occupied with the problem of human destiny. Unlike the story-teller, the novelist, he has no particular interest in human relationships: his people only focus a meditation upon "an indifferent nature? A Satanic principle in things? A good and just God?" But with him desire dominates intellect, and all he sees in nature is filled with vitality:

"The hedges were white with sloe-blossom, and the willow bushes were in flower; a few butterflies were abroad and the bumble-bees. The blackthorn blossoms were shed; the new green of the hedges came, and the sweet scent of may blossom. The may faded, but in the meadows the deeper colour of the buttercups—those June brides—took the place of the maiden cowslips until the hay-mowers came, and then the white and red roses bloomed in the hedges. Midsummer, that time of rich sunshine, was soon gone; the meadows were yellow again with hawkweed, while in the rougher fields the ragwort grew in clumps, upon which the peacock butterflies fed until near drunken with honey."

PADRAIC COLUM

THE HYPOCHONDRIACK

THE HYPOCHONDRIACK. Being the Seventy Essays by the celebrated Biographer James Boswell, appearing in the London Magazine from November 1777 to August 1783, and here first reprinted. *Edited by Margery Bailey. Two volumes. 340 and 356 pages. Stanford University Press. \$15.*

THERE is no doubt that James Boswell—undoubtedly “celebrated Biographer”; “Corsica” Boswell: long in Scots technical phraseology “Younger of Auchinleck” and latterly able to drop the “Younger”—would have been, for the nonce at any rate, quite free from Hypochondria if he could have seen these two very handsome volumes. They are faultless in print and paper: the latter being free from that synthetic or syncretic quality which is apt nowadays, both in America and in England, to make books unduly heavy to hold. The binding in black and silver, if slightly funereal, suits the subject, is agreeable in itself, and brings out the Boswell arms and motto (with the bird-crest whose perkiness fits the celebrated biographer so well) in an admirable fashion. To get these seventy Essays reprinted at all would have been an infinite joy to Boswell, though perhaps he would have regretted a certain combination of bad luck and good temper which cut short the existence of another edition, independent of this, in England. But with this itself even he could find no fault. For Miss Bailey has taken really surprising pains to collate this work of his with his previously known work: and it is common to find more than half the page taken up with parallel or explanatory passages from the great Life, from the Hebrides book, from the Letters, and from the Boswelliana. Even she has now and then, purposely or not, failed to be quite exhaustive here: for she has not cited, as she might have done, on I, 224 as companion to Boswell’s confession that “Imagination can easily cherish a fondness for a pretty chambermaid”—though he thinks one for a “cookmaid” would be indelicate and disgusting—that exquisite passage in the account of his travels where he tells us of the positively chivalrous feeling

which not the ladies but the ladies'-maids at Inveraray excited in him. This is almost a pity: for the gradation of cookmaid, chamber or dairy maid, and *soubrette* is interesting.

But this is a digression. There is plenty of pleasure remaining still in the book for its really invaluable but much abused author. Perhaps Miss Bailey has not chosen the happiest phrase in speaking of Carlyle's "emotional apologies." There is a good deal more than "emotion"—a term at the present moment almost contemptuous—and something quite different from "apology" in Thomas's vindication of James. But she herself though by no means unconscious of her hero's unheroicnesses is evidently fond of him, takes considerable and genuine interest in the matter with which she is now supplying us, and would doubtless scout if not directly resent the suggestion that her labour, however admirable in itself—and it certainly *is* admirable—is if not actually lost at any rate spent on a subject than which many better worth it still wait unattended to.

It is, however, just possible that some readers not quite of a grumbling, still less of a Devil's-Advocate temperament, may harbour or even advance denigrating observations of this kind. In a complete "Works" of James Boswell (and how Jamie would like *that!*) the Hypochondriack, anonymous though it originally was, might of course find a place—might indeed, claim one. But in that case the immense labour which Miss Bailey must have spent would be largely reduced, and the space which the results of that labour take reduced more largely still. And, to speak honestly and plainly, the book (still except as a completion of the "Works") is not of much value. That it is almost destitute of those exquisite bits of innocent self-revelation which disgusted contemporaries and made even men of a later generation but of something like an eighteenth-century temper such as Macaulay unfair, is a thing of which it would be also unfair to complain. Indeed Miss Bailey's cornucopia of parallel passages, though it did not furnish the instance mentioned above, is itself rich in such things. Who but Boswell after quoting one of his absurd letters to his father would quite solemnly have asked his friend Temple whether he, the friend, would not be proud of having a son like that? But as a rule the text shews if not a deliberate exclusion of these inimitable self-characterizations, a quite deliberate endeavour to be as serious as possible—as much up to the level of the more serious eighteenth-

century essay itself as might be. Now this seriousness is not merely not what a vain posterity demands of its author: it is something that any posterity is quite justified in regarding with very limited interest. On the other hand occasional attempts to be more or less elaborately though quite decently funny are a little dreary. No. XLIX "On Identification by Numbers" which would be better titled "An Essay on Buttons" is an instance. Such things however are rare: and the others are abundant. It is not absolutely necessary to be unamiably reminiscent of the fact that Boswell's own Hypochondria was sometimes regarded as better called by another long Greek word which instead of referring "dumps" to something going wrong under the cartilage of the breast-bone assigns them to excessive previous indulgence in stimulants and excitements of one kind or another. To these Bozzy was notoriously and indeed confessedly given: and though he is fairly liberal here of moral advice on this subject as on others, the word at the top of each page is rather a provocative to asking the question, "Have you any business to find fault with your *χρόνος* at all? And if you have could you not possibly administer to that peccant cartilage rather livelier medicaments than these?"

Another slight drawback to the results of Miss Bailey's in themselves admirable labours is that as his wisdom is almost exclusively drawn from other people, and especially from Johnson, we are apt to get Johnson-and-water in the text with pure Johnson in the notes, which suggests an improper process of reading the notes only. However let us cavil no more. The stuff is sometimes very good stuff and never very bad; it is agreeably presented in all mechanical respects; and the labour spent on it is vigorous and knowledgeable. A person named Prometheus did certainly once apply rude language to certain kinds of labour. But when you are spreadeagled against a rock with uncomfortable detaining devices at your hands and feet you can hardly be said to be in a position to deliver calm and well-balanced judgements.

GEORGE SAINTSBURY

BRIEFER MENTION

THE REDEMPTION OF TYCHO BRAHE, by Max Brod, translated from the German by Felix Warren Crosse, with introduction by Stefan Zweig (12mo, 289 pages; Knopf: \$2.50) has a spaciousness and eloquence which only a first-rate imagination can bring to the art of the historical novel. The spiritual conflict between Tycho Brahe, Danish astronomer, and Kepler is traced with a dramatic intensity which suggests Ibsen, and there is something of the elemental tragedy of Lear in the life of Tycho himself. Max Brod has taken stubborn material and—by sheer creative fervour—made it plastic and richly subservient to his purpose.

ARMANCE, by Stendhal (Henri Beyle) translated from the French by C. K. Scott Moncrieff (12mo, 282 pages; Boni & Liveright: \$2.50) is neither a first-class novel nor an interesting one in spite of the publishers who jacket the book with a promise of sexual interest. It is an early work of a genius; it has a few profound observations and readers of *Red and Black* and *The Charterhouse of Parma* will find in its characters early sketches of the towering figures of those novels. The suggestion that Stendhal was writing a novel about an impotent man and concealing the fact is not out of keeping with his private character, but is neither consistent with his methods as a novelist nor borne out by the text.

BAMBI, by Felix Salten, translated from the German by Whittaker Chambers, with a foreword by John Galsworthy (10mo, 293 pages; Simon & Schuster: \$2.50) is composed with such simplicity that it might well serve as a text to trace the distinction between fine writing and fine feeling. There is no artifice here, unless one gives that name to an occasional twinkle of gentle irony. The story is unfolded so quietly that one can quite hear the stillness of the forest in which it is set. Being a poet, the author is not so much concerned with what may be reported by observation as he is intent upon what may be conveyed by imagination. He has written a story about animals which is neither condescending nor conventional.

SWAN SONG, by John Galsworthy (12mo, 360 pages; Scribner's: \$2.50). One can very well admire here, the dexterity, judgement, and continence of a practised novelist getting up loose ends of prior tales into a story of some worth and being. *Swan Song* is not an advance upon *The White Monkey* or *The Silver Spoon*, its companions in the wake of the *Saga*, nor is it any more than they, a needed convoy for that great ship of fiction. Yet it is well-contained, and what can be done it does with an eminent technique and sympathies that though thin at several points are rich at others. The tale seems principally concerned with the recrudescence of Fleur Forsyte's passion for her cousin Jon Forsyte, but perhaps the deeper centre of sympathy in the picture lies in her father, Soames, the man of property, that "dry grey spirit." The depiction here is no better than that in the *Saga*, but it is certainly good.

THE EEL AND OTHER POEMS, by Evan Morgan, with foreword by Alfred Noyes (10mo, 55 pages; Brentano's: \$1.50). These poems breathe a spirit of resignation not far removed from melancholy, and one has the feeling that the mood is dictated less by experience than by the conscious assumption of a rôle. The poet speaks truly when he addresses Uriel, the Angel of Death: "Oh, I have thought of you too much. . . ." The brooding quality of the verses is akin to an exquisite line from *The Infanta Passes*: "Distant murmurs ever ebbing nearer murmurs overtake."

NOCTURNES AND AUTUMNALS, by David Morton (10mo, 52 pages; Putnam: \$1.75). No reader who has been saturated with old poetic sentiment can fail to respond to these gentle, sad, plaintive sonnets. As free from rhetoric as they are immune to modernity there is here such authentic response to the more wistful undertones of Nature that the absence of human intensity, of any revolt or of any acceptance of life, in the philosophical sense, is felt to be a relief rather than a drawback. The technical difficulty of the form itself does not obtrude. From sonnet to sonnet we are beguiled along an easy way, melancholy, tender, slow; and are touched without being transported.

THE OXFORD BOOK OF AMERICAN VERSE, 18th to 20th Centuries, chosen and edited by Bliss Carmen (12mo, 680 pages; Oxford University Press, American Branch: \$3.75). What this substantial and mechanically well-made volume must suggest are the limitations of American poetry. Certain of the selections, it is true, such as that from Whitman's *Song of Myself*, or from the Santayana sonnets, or from Robert Frost, afford satisfactions. But one cannot feel that all or perhaps even a majority of the inclusions are of this sort. The polished pedestrianism of Henry Van Dyke, Thomas Nelson Page, Maurice Thompson, Charles W. Stoddard, William Winter, Edward S. Martin, Richard Burton, Rose Terry Cooke, and too many others of the same calibre here included is only such, the reader must feel, as can—and will ultimately—be spared.

HUC AND GABET: Travels in Tartary, Thibet, and China, translated from the French by William Hazlitt, now edited with introduction by Professor Paul Pelliot (2 vols., 8vo, 793 pages; Harpers: \$10) is a narrative so curious and so antique in flavour that one might readily imagine it to be the work of Marco Polo's contemporaries rather than the travel recital of two nineteenth-century monks. The two adventurers seemingly bore a charmed life, going serenely forward in the face of all hazards, inclined to take a charitable view of what they observed, no matter how contrary it might be to their own belief. Concerning certain worldly details, of course, they manifested a proper degree of monastic indifference. The jewelled adornments of the Tartar women, for example, are dismissed as "spangles of gold and silver, pearls, coral and a thousand other toys, the form and quality of which it would be difficult for us to define, as we had neither opportunity, nor taste, nor patience to pay serious attention to these futilities." Perhaps it was opportunity—rather than taste or patience—which they chiefly lacked. In any event, they had plenty of all three for most purposes, as these chapters abundantly testify.

CONTEMPORARIES OF MARCO POLO, edited by Manuel Komroff (8vo, 358 pages; Boni & Liveright: \$3.50). Curious are the customs and strange are the practices which came to the notice of the four worthy travellers whose records have been made beguilingly accessible in this volume. That William of Rubruck and John of Pian de Carpin and Friar Odoric and Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela are all equally reliable reporters one is quite ready to believe for the sake of the relish which their recitals impart, although Friar Odoric is the only one sufficiently mindful of the scepticism of posterity to put his probity on oath, in these solemn words: "I—before almighty God—do here make record of nothing but of that only of which I am as sure as a man may be sure." In any event, one does not doubt that the Tartars, as Friar William affirms, "are very scrupulous, and take diligent heed not to drink pure water by itself." To these colourful narratives, Mr Komroff contributes an introduction and a bibliography.

TRAVELS IN NORTH AFRICA, by Nahum Slouschz (12mo, 488 pages; Jewish Publication Society of America: \$2). The penetration of French civilization into the African countries bordering the Mediterranean will inevitably do away with the distinctive type of African Jew; Mr Slouschz has made a valuable contribution to the social history of his race in this first-hand survey. Traits and traditions which have endured for centuries are rapidly being submerged. This transitional period is not, in the opinion of the author, without compensations. In general, he finds himself in harmony with the French policy of "gallicizing the Jews without dejudaising them."

ADVENTURES OF AN AFRICAN SLAVER, by Captain Theodore Canot, edited with introduction by Malcolm Cowley, illustrated by Miguel Covarrubias (8vo, 376 pages, A. & C. Boni: \$4) is a supremely interesting autobiography of a man who was either a glutton for adventure or, as one suspects, ascribed to himself whatever adventures seemed most interesting. The book is written in the style of the 1850's—the actual verbiage being by one Brantz Mayer; nevertheless it is vivid, it has terrific go, and it tells terrible things. The modern editor has done an excellent job, the make-up and illustrations are excellent, and the whole makes one wonder why—since this is a success—shoddy like *Trader Horn* should also succeed.

KIT CARSON, The Happy Warrior of the Old West, by Stanley Vestal (8vo, 297 pages; Houghton Mifflin: \$3.50) will not fail to quicken the pulse of even the least pioneer of readers. Mr Vestal seems to have had a happy endowment for his task; he has served up his hero with an effective blend of appreciation and restraint, so that the picturesque trapper and fighter is delineated neither as a circus-poster absurdity nor as a stock pattern for five-reel westerns. The measure of the man, as his biographer points out, is discernible in the brief notes on his own life which he dictated but could not read. "Constantly in his memoirs," remarks Mr Vestal, "he uses the expression 'concluded to charge them, done so' all in one sentence. To Kit decision and action were but two steps in one process." One suspects that Wall Street chooses its executives from Kit Carson stock.

HAVELOCK ELLIS, *Philosopher of Love*, by Houston Peterson (8vo, 432 pages; Houghton Mifflin: \$4.50). This biography is not perhaps in the tradition of incisiveness, and even suffers somewhat from over-quotation, especially from the elsewhere available works of Dr Ellis. Still these are not impassable hindrances to those who are interested in the subject, and in reading through these four hundred pages one comes to a very full impression of the immense and various activities of scholarship, the poise and courage, the humanity, the tranquil and elastic mind that have made Dr Ellis so great a modern.

W. E. GLADSTONE, by Osbert Burdett (8vo, 307 pages; Houghton Mifflin Company: \$4). Not perhaps the most completely shaped and stated of biographies this volume yet represents effective sifting of the apparent multiplicities of Gladstone's vast life, a sifting from which there issues an intelligible impression of the man's inscrutably vital personality. The hortatory powers, the tremendous earnestness of this "muscular Christian of politics" were not, we learn, at the service of convictions particularly his own but rather of his obscure but delicate sense of the convictions of his constituents, or of his even obscurer but even more profound sense of what would be their convictions on the political morrow. It was not that he was insincere. On the contrary, it was his sincerity that made him the mountainous figure he was in British politics. The biography is a considered and persuasive interpretation of character.

THE TRAINING OF AN AMERICAN, *The Earlier Life and Letters of Walter Hines Page*, by Burton J. Hendrick (8vo, 444 pages; Houghton Mifflin: \$5). If he is not a genealogist the reader would do well to begin this book at Chapter V, which deals with Page's apprenticeship to journalism. The previous chapters are the customary eulogium of parents, grandparents, school-fellows, and early days. With Chapter V, however, the letters begin to appear, in those short explanatory settings which were so successful in the preceding volumes. There is then present to the reader, in the person of Page, the editor of *The Forum* and *The Atlantic Monthly*, and throughout, an individuality of pungency and mark, amply prejudiced but with an inspiring range of imagination, infused with idealistic fire but having also a telling sense of what could and could not be accomplished in the contemporary scene. Pagian *mots* are frequent, such as, "It is easy to mistake bad judgment for bad luck; indeed they do belong to the same family."

CHRISTOPHER C. ANDREWS, *Pioneer in Forestry Conservation in the United States: for sixty years a Dominant Influence in the Public Affairs of Minnesota: Lawyer: Editor: Diplomat: General in the Civil War*. Recollections: 1829-1922, edited by his daughter Alice E. Andrews, with an introduction by William Watts Folwell, LL.D. (8vo, 327 pages; Arthur H. Clark Co.: \$6). The title-page quoted above suggests, correctly, that the subject had an interesting life and met interesting and important people, that he was a good public servant and citizen. The book adds nothing to that suggestion.

CONTEMPORARIES: Current Forms of Composition From Lawrence C. Woodman's Coe College Freshman English Classes 1927-1928, edited by Roland Kampmeier, with introductions by Jay G. Sigmund, Lawrence C. Woodman, and Louis Burkhalter (12mo, 200+60 pages; Kruse Publishing Co., Vinton, Iowa: \$2 post-paid from Lawrence C. Woodman, R. F. D. # 4, Cedar Rapids, Iowa; \$1.60 post-paid to teachers of English). In these specimens of creative writing, one is trammelled by various standard phases of journalistic abundance—by "thrilled"; "weird"; "wonderful"; "enthused"; and "quite" used in the sense of somewhat; by jocoseness, selfconsciousness, didacticism; and by other burst bonds which collegiate monasticism should take account of. But an instructor's belief that his students can write poetry, plays, essays, or fiction, constitutes help which customary willingness to depend upon text-books "a lot", and despair of "around half the students", cannot give. Certain of the selections attain depth of presentment, and exhibit a concentration and simplicity which do charm one.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST, by Joseph Gordon Macleod (12mo, 303 pages; Viking Press: \$2.50) formulates an aesthetic standard—"in Art everything is permissible except bad Aesthetic"—and applies it rigorously to the whole range of literature. Mr Macleod does not moisten his tongue and affix labels in the facile manner of the superficial critic; he thinks hard and in a straight line. "There is no fence between naïveté and supreme genius: for both are the speech of isolation," he writes. Again, "You cannot read poetry as you read grammar, because in grammar there are no silences." Particularly illuminating is the distinction which the author makes between art "that is a channel to sublimation" and art which is an avenue to the sublime. One can hardly hope to reduce Mr Macleod's cogent reasoning to a paragraph. Those who still find the analytical study of literature exciting will welcome the refreshment of these pages.

CHARACTER AND THE CONDUCT OF LIFE, by William McDougall (10mo, 394 pages; Putnam: \$3.75). Professor McDougall here presents a treatise on the art of self-management from the psychological point of view. His counsels are no doubt psychological and rational enough, and one is perhaps the better persuaded to virtue in being afforded psychological reasons for it. Yet all in all, there seems little more here than any tolerably informed modern adult would have taken for granted. The reader will find a more lively, compact, and suggestive contribution to the same subject in Arnold Bennett's *How to Live on 24 Hours a Day*.

THE METAPHYSICS OF PRAGMATISM, by Sidney Hook (8vo, 144 pages; Open Court Publishing Company: \$2). Though *un*-controversial this brief book is yet, within its scope, not far from a model apologia for the pragmatist. It contributes substantially toward the just synthesis of the positions of the pragmatic pioneers (Pierce and Dewey more than James) with the positions of their critics, the philosophers of the classical tradition. In such assimilation, doubtless, both parties to the treaty must suffer modification, but the present author can be seen to possess the tact of thought, the readiness to see more than parts, which is often able to show that "modifications" are really "harmonies." Not least among the merits of the book are the ease and order of its expression.

COMMENT

STRANGE things are said about good people and none stranger than remarks hazarded about geniuses as if they were boxers or champion live-stock. When one cannot appraise out of one's own experience, the temptation to blunder is minimized, but even when one can, appraisal seems chiefly useful as appraisal of the appraiser.

In the months which have passed since the death of Dame Ellen Terry, the irresponsibleness of some and the assumed responsible-ness of others have suggested these acerbities; but the sense of benefit one has always experienced in the thought of her makes acerbities not the right word, for her generosity should mellow us toward the littleness of those who would make little of her uncommon gift and attainments—to say nothing of her sense of honour—not always associated with genius. She felt it "hateful" to be "compelled to break faith," "hated the idea of drawing a large salary and doing next to no work," and felt that "not until we have learned to be useful can we afford to do what we like." "The artist," she said, "must spend his life in incessant labor" and she notes in Henry Irving "a kind of fine temper, like the purest steel, produced by the perpetual fight against difficulties," his fortune "counted not in gold, but in years of scorned delights" and "deep melancholy." The axiom is not a favourite with artists, that "before you can be eccentric you must know where the circle is," but Miss Terry had the mystic's conviction that humility and common sense are the same thing. She recollects eagerly Mrs Kean's sharp lessons in enunciation: "You must say, *her* not *har*; it's *God*, not *Gud*; *remon*strance, not *remun*strance;" but she also notes that to take criticism in a slavish spirit is of little use and it is a picture of herself she gives us in bequeathing the instruction, pace "is not a question of swift utterance only, but of swift thinking."

Familiar as the word gratitude is, and Ellen Terry was incandescently grateful, its fire is not something to be learned like the "ardent exits" she studied to perfect. With her it was innately a part of that goodness without malice which speaks so unselfprotectively of our (America's) able architects, our scholarly critics, of our young girls each with a cast of the Winged Victory in her

room, and of our negro servants as "delightful," "so attractive," "so deft and gentle."

"Why the word 'theatrical' should have come to be used in a contemptuous sense," Miss Terry wrote, "I cannot understand;" nor can we, recalling the imagination and sensibility which some have brought to the theatre. The sense of "life as imagination"—shared by her son, but first hers—constitutes a nimbus before which death retires. Imagination receives homage, but "Principalities and Powers and Possibilities," that "crowd of unseen forms," "those words which are never heard," "those figures which seldom shape themselves more definitely than a cloud's shadow," bequeath more than bays. In such presence, as a writer in this issue of *THE DIAL* reminds us

"Time is but a shadow
Which forever passeth away."

Imagination, moreover, that is kind, travels far without occasion to carp, and despite the suddenness of certain "terrific" scenery which she did not quite like, Miss Terry thought America "a land of sunshine and light, of happiness, of faith in the future." We ourselves scarcely find it in harmony with the oldness of England. But not all of it is without usefulness—the modest value she bespoke for herself. One recalls her saying, "*I have been a useful actress.*" A gallant bowsprit that leads when heavier vessels sink, she never spoke of being tired, though she says somewhere, "the long low lines of my Sussex marshland near Winchelsea give me rest." One instinctively envies the children who came to her garden of their own accord, but association so gentle was fitting; and those remote and deprived will cherish the lines well liked by Miss Terry herself, "e'en in our ashes burn our wonted fires."

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